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FRAMED BY PRIVILEGE: PERPETUATING AND RESISTING WHITE SUPREMACY IN WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING

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PERPETUATING AND RESISTING WHITE SUPREMACY

IN WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS PARENTING

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ABSTRACT

Framed by privilege:

Perpetuating and resisting White supremacy in White, middle-class parenting

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Parenting is a primary site for the socialization of young children, including socialization around issues of race and racism. Giving careful attention to the implications of a socially privileged racial status, this study draws on the personal narratives of three White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers living in Chicago to improve understanding of White, middle-class parenting around issues of race and racism and to critically examine the ways parenting practices relate to larger social Discourses in the United States that perpetuate or disrupt White supremacy. When parenting around issues of race and racism, mothers adherent to White supremacy typically abandoned parenting strategies they found consistently successful for supporting their children's adoption of specific values in more general parenting contexts. However, women with a broader understanding of racism and with an awareness of children as racially aware and engaged beings were more likely to rebuke racism and seek to enact anti-racist parenting strategies.

Keywords: parenting, race, racial privilege, racism, socialization, White supremacy

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

We're supposed to fight for freedom, not just the end of slavery.

      – excerpted from "Remind My Soul," Akrobatik

we can't afford to do anyone harm

because we owe them our lives

each breath is recycled

from someone else's lungs

our enemies are the very air in disguise

you can talk a great philosophy

but... it's the little things you do

the little things you say

it's the love you give along the way

      – excerpted from "looking for the holes," Ani DiFranco

we are each other's

harvest:

we are each other's

business:

we are each other's

magnitude and bond.

      – excerpted from "Paul Robeson," Gwendolyn Brooks

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INTRODUCTION

In many cultures around the world, children are valued as a guarantee of the future and as the vessel through which to preserve social and cultural values and beliefs. Many adults find comfort and hope in knowing that children will grow and mature to carry on when others have passed. Children are seen as legacy-bearers, the perpetuators of culture, and the embodiment of history. Adults are reassured that through children their own identities, cultures, ways of life, beliefs, and value systems will live on beyond them. As such, the raising of children, though commonplace, is an arena rife with contention and struggle over questions of what children should know, who they should be, and how they should engage in the world. Socialization – "the way in which individuals are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups" (Grusec & Hastings, 2007, p. 1) – is a long-term process to which many social agents contribute, including family, peers, educators, media, and material culture. But parents are perhaps the most critical in shaping children's early socialization (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 1992; Williams, n.d.). Parents and guardians lay the foundations through which societal structures and ideologies are produced, reproduced, and shared from one generation to the next. Included in the socialization process are cultural values, beliefs, and ideologies focused on issues of race and racism.

Race can be understood as a socially constructed dimension of individual and group identity with no natural or biological validity that is used to categorize and subsequently rank groups of people (Anderson, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 1997) based predominantly on phenotypical characteristics including skin color, facial features, and hair (Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 2007). In the United States, a White racial ascription is socially dominant (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 1997) and results in the accumulation of unearned social, political, and economic privileges for White people at the expense of people of color (Bell, Castañeda & Zúñiga, 2010). This complex system of advantage based on race is called racism and manifests in a myriad of ways both blatant and subtle and both personal and structural.

In conjunction with the social dominance of a White racial ascription, in the United States Whiteness is the racial norm – the standard against which all else is compared. Whiteness is both an identity and a cultural practice (Giroux, 1997). In her studies of Whiteness, Ruth Frankenberg offered a number of ideas by which to understand the

meaning of Whiteness in the racially-biased context of the United States. She suggests that Whiteness is simultaneously a social location of structural advantage; a cultural standpoint from which to interpret one's self, others, and the social order; a collection of cultural practices and identities often left unnamed or marked as "normal" rather than racial; a frame renamed or displaced by ethnic or class identities; a category marked by contested and shifting measures of inclusion; a site of racial privilege intersecting with other hierarchies of domination and subordination; a relationally constructed product of history; and a socially-constructed identity with very real material and discursive consequences (2004, p. 113). Whiteness is a complex way of being in the world, and yet it is typically an unmarked, invisible identity (Frankenberg, 1993; Lewis, 2004; McKinney, 2005) framing much of the United States' dominant social structures and hierarchies.

White supremacy is a belief system that constructs a racial order in which White people receive unearned social privilege and power and unequal access to social resources (Mills, 2003) while people of color are subjugated and deprived of the same privileges, powers, and resources through a broad array of social institutions and settings. The ideology of White supremacy is enacted and reproduced through Discourses (Gee, 2004) – the sum of both social discourse (language) and practices (Van Dijk, 2006).

This work of this study has the potential to contribute to two key areas of scholarly research – first, an understanding of White parenting practices and their relationship to issues of race and racism, and second, the role of race and racism in the lives of young children. While a great deal of attention has been paid in social science research to the role of parents in the socialization processes of young children (for a review of the research, see Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 1992; Maccoby 2007), research about the parenting beliefs and practices of families embodying specific social identities is prone to gaps. In the United States, research addressing the parenting attitudes and practices of people of color around issues of race and racism is relatively plentiful, but we know remarkably little about the racial socialization beliefs and practices within White families (Hamm, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006), likely due to their embodiment of a socially dominant and culturally defining position of privilege (Anderson, 2003; McIntosh, 1995; Rothenberg, 2000; Wise, 2008).

In addition, in the United States and particularly among Whites, children are often believed to be innocently "color-blind" and likely to remain free of racial bias unless explicitly taught otherwise. But a growing body of research is slowly demonstrating these

assumptions to be false (Byrne, 2006b; Katz, 2003; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Children, even very young children, do notice racial differences, are capable of acting in ways that reflect racial bias, and can develop racial bias without ever receiving explicit instruction on its tenants or practices (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Katz, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 1997; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Even so, this field of scholarly research is still limited and often focuses on demonstrating children's racial awareness, rather than also working to identify and address the factors that contribute to their adoption or rejection of racist ideologies.

As such, critically examining the parenting beliefs and practices of adults situated by their socially dominant identities as White, middle-class, heterosexual beings holds relevance for understanding the ways in which dominant racial structures and ideologies are reproduced or dismantled in the parenting of young children. Holding fast to this intention, the study sought to collect data that would support two central goals:

1) the documentation of ways that White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers of young children make meaning of their own parenting intentions and practices around issues of race and racism.

2) the identification and critical scrutiny of ways that these adults' parenting processes relate to larger social Discourses in the United States that either perpetuate or disrupt the racial ideology of White supremacy.

Meeting these aims would begin to address the lack of research intentionally identifying and naming White parenting patterns and would create a platform for theorizing potential anti-racist parenting approaches or strategies that might encourage children's rejection of racist ideologies and their adoption of anti-racist values and beliefs.

The chapters of this study are laid out to address these areas of interest in greater depth. The first chapter offers a more detailed review of scholarly research grounding this study, including discussions related to race and racism (including racial positionality, Whiteness, and White supremacy) and related to parenting as a site of racial socialization for young children. In addition, the chapter reviews existing literature about young children and race, marking their developmental capabilities and what is known about their level of engagement in our racialized world. The second chapter explains the methodological frameworks within which this study was designed and implemented. It explains the methodological reliance on personal narratives to reflect both personal and

societal stories, as well as the process through which research participants were recruited and engaged. It also outlines the process through which the resulting data has been analyzed. The third chapter documents the accounts of Corinne, Katie, and Terra[1], the three White, middle-class women who participated in the study. The chapter examines their general parental attitudes and practices, as well as their personal beliefs on issues of race and racism. It then presents the critical location where the mothers' perspectives on parenting and their perspectives on race and racism meet. The chapter continues with a description of the women's parental actions around issues of race and racism, and concludes with a discussion of the intersection between White, middle-class parenting and White supremacy, suggesting contexts in which White parenting serves to reproduce racial inequality and situations in which White parenting can become a site of resistance to White supremacy. In the final chapter of the study, key locations are suggested from which the parenting practices of well-intentioned White adults might be shifted to more productively pursue anti-racist work.

In its entirety, this study is grounded in two convictions — first, that marking, documenting, and seeking to understand the racial beliefs, discourses, and practices of White people is vital for supporting efforts to end racism and, second, that parenting is a viable location from which to resist racist ideologies and behaviors and from which to engage anti-racist practice. In addition, this study is based on the assumption that the pursuit of racial equality is a necessary endeavor for the liberation of all people from the harmful, unjust effects of White supremacy that currently dominate our nation's racial geography.

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[1] To protect the identities and privacy of study participants, the names of participants, their family members, and their friends and acquaintances have been replaced by pseudonyms, and social or geographic markers that could lead to participants' identification, such as the names of the companies by which they are employed, the names of their children's schools, and so forth, have been omitted or changed.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The work of this study is guided by a collection of theoretical concepts and empirical research that lay the foundations for framing the study and for analyzing the resulting data. Conceptually, the work is grounded in a series of complexly layered ideas: the social construction of race, the oppressive nature of racism, the consequences of racial positionality, the meaning and lived reality of Whiteness, the ideology of White supremacy, and the social Discourses through which White supremacy is enacted and reproduced. These theoretical concepts are then examined through the parenting beliefs and practices of White,[2] middle-class, heterosexual women in the process of parenting young children. Relevant empirical literature to contextualize the work addresses parenting as a site for the socialization of young children, the consequences of a White social positionality for the socialization of children around issues of race and racism, and what is known about children's development as relates to racial awareness and engagement. Firmly grounded in these sets of theoretical and empirical knowledge, this study examines the accounts of mothers framed by White, middle-class, heterosexual privilege to identify and consider their explicit and embodied views and beliefs on parenting and the ways in which they endeavor to contribute to the racial socialization of their children – specifically their child(ren)'s adoption of ideologies concerning the acceptance of or resistance to existing social hierarchies of racial privilege and power.

In the review of theoretical concepts and literature that follows, particular attention is paid to the following topics of interest: 1) the ways in which privilege and inequality – especially in the context of racial identity – are embedded in both the personal and institutional social structures of our nation; 2) the applicability of feminist standpoint theory for understanding the perpetuation of hierarchies of racial inequality and its insight into the role of persons possessing unearned privilege in the perpetuation or disruption of racism; 3) the role of parents as agents of socialization in their children's lives; 4) the enactment of racial socialization practices among White families, as well as families with racially marginalized identities; and 5) the relevancy of placing concerted attention and focus on the racial socialization of young children.

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[2] When I use the term "White" I am referring to people, typically of European ancestry, who by virtue of their light skin color (and perhaps also their national origin and culture) are perceived to be "White" and thus members of the racially dominant group and recipients of unearned race-based privileges (Tatum, 2007; Wise, 2008).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Race – A social construction and a tangible reality

As humans, we are not born with a racial identity, as race has been shown to have no biological or genetic validity (Anderson, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 1997). As a social construction, however, race is ascribed upon us from the earliest moments of our lives, including the listing of race on our birth certificates. Rather than race being a natural or inherently "real" identity marker constructed from the inside out, it is a social marker that shapes identity from the outside in – using external markers to designate, as well as continually recreate, one's racial identity as understood in relation to others. Sociologist Amanda Lewis (2003) explained, "Race then is not a real or innate characteristic of bodies but a set of signifiers projected onto these bodies – signifiers we must learn about and negotiate in order to successfully move through the social world" (p. 6). As such, racial identities gain validity not through a biological or natural process, but through the social processes of learning the socially available racial options, the boundaries of racial categories, how to identify oneself and others in the context of available racial groups, and the meanings and lived reality of racial group membership.

As a consequence of its constructed nature, the boundaries of racial categories are neither fixed nor without contestation. In ascribing race, phenotypical characteristics are typically used as primary markers of difference (Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 2007). Skin color, as well as facial features and hair, are used to assign racial belonging. Secondary markers of racial identity are used to augment primary markers or to identify racial belonging that might otherwise seem ambiguous (Byrne, 2006b; Lewis, 2003). These markers of difference can include language, culture, socioeconomic status, and name, among others. For example, a person may appear White, but knowledge of their surname may shift others' ascription of their racial/ethnic identity to that of being Latino, Native American, or another racial or ethnic group. Similarly, someone's language fluency or accent, clothing, or geographic location may draw into question their "true" racial identity. Conversely, a person may self-identify as a person of color because of lineage, but may be assumed to be White because of light-colored skin or Anglo features. As such, the socially constructed nature of race is easiest to see on the borders between racial categories. It is in these locations where racial ascription becomes ambiguous, conflicts over identity arise, and the process of racial construction and ascription becomes conscious and in need of explanation (Fountas, 2005; O'Hearn, 1998).

Race's constructed nature is also visible in its shifting identity within history and geography. The history of the United States' Census, for example, outlines the continuously changing ideas of government-recognized categories of race and ethnicity. In 1850, for example, Census takers collected data on "Color," such that the column was left blank if a person was White, marked with a "B" if the person was Black[3], and marked with an "M" if the person was Mulatto (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). In 1870, categorical options for "Color" were expanded to include White, Black, Mulatto, Chinese (which included all east Asians), and American Indian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). In 1890, Census collection changed further, introducing the term "Race" with categorical options of White, Black, Mulatto, Quadroon, Octoroon, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Shifts occurred continuously, with changes in language and/or recognized racial categories nearly every decade. In the most recent Census, in 2010, participants could mark their racial identity as one or more of the following: "White," "Black, African Am., or Negro," "American Indian or Alaska Native" (and were asked to name their enrolled or principal tribe), "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Other Asian" (and were asked to specify), "Japanese," "Korean," "Vietnamese," "Native Hawaiian," "Guamanian or Chamorro," "Samoan," "Other Pacific Islander" (and were asked to specify) or "Some other race" (and were again asked to specify). In addition, data on questions of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin" were also collected with specifications related to geographic or cultural origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011d). The changing socio-

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[3] A note on language: Throughout this paper, when citing directly from research or quoting a participant, I preserve the racial labels (and capitalization or lack) used in their language. When writing with my own voice, I typically attempt to use the terminology people themselves prefer be used. In the United States, Blacks' preferred terminology for how their racial group should be described continues to shift. In 1989, the term Black was preferred over African-American by a margin of 66 percent to 22 percent (Sigelman & Welch, 1991, p. xi). In 2007, those with a preference preferred the term African-American at a rate of 24 percent to the 13 percent who preferred the term Black. 61 percent said it didn't matter which of the two terms was used (Newport, 2007, para. 5). When asked in 2005 if they preferred Black or African-American, with no explicit option of "no preference," responses were split with 48 percent preferring the term Black and 49% preferring the term African-American (Newport, 2007, para. 8). As there is no strong consensus among the vastly diverse Black populations in the United States, I prefer the term Black because I find it more broadly inclusive than African-American, as there are Black people in the United States who don't identify as African-American – Afro-Caribbeans, for example – and they too are targeted by racism. In addition, I capitalize both Black and White in recognition that they are proper nouns naming specific socially constructed groups and to mark them as distinct from colors as in a pigment or hue.

political definition of race and government-recognized racial categories, including both "color-races" and "nation-races" (Roediger, 2005), is evident.

In addition to the expanding number of recognized racial categories, the boundaries defining racial identities have also continued to shift and change within society over time. As example, many American ethnic groups considered White today – including Italian-, Irish-, Polish-, and Jewish-Americans – were not always considered White, but rather "dark White" or even non-White and only gradually gained social acceptance as "White" Americans (Roediger, 2005). And in today's society, contestations are still taking place over who is included and excluded from a "White" identity. As only one example, light skinned immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Latin American nations – people considered White in their ancestral nations and who self-identify as White – may have their Whiteness challenged or denied in the United States due to their immigrant status, language use, or performance of cultural identities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 31-32; Lewis, 2003, p. 124).

Neither the definition of race nor racial distinctions are fixed, and yet their ever-changing meanings within U.S. society matter because the histories, legal ramifications, economic and political realities, material implications, and shifting social consciousnesses they represent and shape have direct consequences for the lived experiences of all people in society.

It is because of the social implications of racial ascriptions that race cannot be understood separately from racism. Educators Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards (2010) explained:

> The concept of *race* is a socially defined construct used as a way to fraudulently divide people into groups ranked as superior and inferior. The scientific consensus is that *race* in this sense has no biological basis…. What the system of race *does* have is a long history in the world as a tool to justify one group's mistreatment, economic exploitation, and annihilation of other groups. (p. 77, emphasis in original)

One's racial identity impacts access to economic resources, political power, and cultural rights in large part because social practices are heavily impacted by racial stereotypes and prejudice (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989, p. 31). In United States' society, where a White racial ascription is dominant over all others (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 1997), the consequences of that social, political, and historical

preference impact everyone daily. In documenting the consequences of race for families and communities, The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2006 report titled "Race Matters: Unequal Opportunities for Family and Community Economic Success" showed that:

> In every aspect of society, White children are more likely to have access to resources that support healthy development and future successes, such as safe neighborhoods and good schools. Children of color are still disproportionately living in poverty. Children of color are more likely to be members of low-income families who cannot afford health insurance or primary doctors. They are more likely to live in environments where they are exposed to toxic conditions, and their families have less access to healthy food at the lower prices for similar food available to higher-income families. (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 77-78)

Despite its failure to be a biologically valid identity marker, the social construction of race carries significant and tangible consequences for the lived reality of individuals and groups. Race matters.

In their work, social justice researchers and advocates Lee Anne Bell, Rosie Castañeda, and Ximena Zúñiga (2010) succinctly explained the socio-historical relationships between race, racism, and White supremacy in the United States, marking the ways that social power gives race a very real social presence when differently metered to inhabitants at varying locations within our culture's racial hierarchy. They wrote:

> *Race* is a sociopolitical not a biological construct, one that is created and reinforced by social and institutional norms and practices, as well as individual attitudes and behaviors.… [R]ace emerged historically in the United States to justify the dominance peoples defined as "White" (colonists/settlers) held over other people defined as "non-White" (first Native Americans and enslaved Africans and later Mexicans, Chinese, Puerto Ricans, and South Asians and others racialized as non-White). Motivated by economic interests and entrenched through law and public policy, we see this process of racialization unfolding historically and continually reinvented to perpetuate economic, political, and social advantage for people racialized as White within the United States. We call this process and the system it sustains *White supremacy.* (p. 60, emphasis in original)

Thus, despite the constructed nature of race, racial ideologies and racialized social structures in the United States build upon a long history of race-based inequalities and the

unequal distribution of power and resources. Together these factors compound to produce very tangible, material inequalities that affect nearly every aspect of our contemporary lives (Alcoff, 1998; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Wise, 2008).

Racism – U.S. social structures, unearned privilege, and racial inequality

In the United States, and around the world, individuals embody uniquely personal amalgamations of compiled and compounding social identity markers, and identity traits – be they biologically or contextually derived, self-identified or ascribed, changeable or permanent – are tied to group memberships that fit into ranked hierarchies of power and privilege within society (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Tatum, 1997). Embedded within identity categories are often hegemonic hierarchies that include positions of dominance and positions of subordination to which are distributed, according to rank, social privilege and power (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Roediger, 2005; Trepagnier, 2006). And yet, social power is not dispensed according to merit or earning, with some level of privilege or benefit offered to all inhabitants of the hierarchy, in degree, from the bottom up. Rather, in the context of social hierarchies, privilege and power are unearned and are distributed and received in direct relation to social markers, including race, class, gender, and sexuality, which are rarely chosen, but are rather born into or ascribed by compulsory involvement in the systems of stratification themselves (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1995; Wise, 2008). Positions of dominance are typically constructed as the social norm to which privilege and power is an entitlement, not a reward based on merit. All other positions are placed in proximity to this "neutral" "norm" and are denied or offered limited access to social benefits and social authority as a result (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993). Persons who embody hegemonic norms are the recipients of unearned social power, and in the United States traits reflective of the privileged social "norm" include being identifiable as White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, English-speaking, U.S.-born, Christian, and male, among a much longer list of socially dominant identities.

A key feature of hierarchies of social power is that those in positions of social privilege often fail to recognize that their dominance connotes advantage that is symbiotically connected to others' subordination (Andersen, 2003; McIntosh, 1995; Rothenberg, 2000; Wise, 2008). White, middle-class, heterosexual persons, for example, benefit from the social privileges conferred by several socially dominant identity markers (in the categories of race, class, and sexuality), and while they may consider themselves socially "neutral" or "the norm," they live "raced," "classed," and "gendered" lives permeated with social power resulting from their place in the social hierarchy, even if

those identities are left culturally unmarked or unnamed (Byrne, 2006a; Frankenberg, 1993; Lewis, 2004).

Race is but one identity marker enacted in conjunction with a corresponding hierarchy of social power and privilege. The complex system of advantage based on race is called racism (Anderson & Collins, 2007, p. 67-68; Tatum, 1997, p. 7), and race and racism have material and ideological consequences for all people (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In the United States, unearned racial power and privilege is disseminated based primarily on skin color (Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 1997). Individuals and groups are placed along a continuum of privilege and disadvantage such that at one end those with light/"White" skin are granted social advantages and privileges while at the other end those with dark/"Black" skin are denied or restricted access to the same benefits (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

What distinguishes racism from prejudice is the role of social power. Prejudice is a bias or judgment, typically negative, based upon limited knowledge or facts. But prejudice is not necessarily backed by social power. Rather than functioning societally, prejudices are personal beliefs, and any person can have prejudicial ideas. For example, a person of any race or ethnicity can hold racial prejudices against any other racial or ethnic group (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Tatum, 1997). But racism is not merely the expression of prejudice. Racism can better be understood as "prejudice plus power" (Tatum, 1997, p. 7), in that racism is the *systemic* manifestation of bias. "[R]acism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based on racial prejudice, but a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and action of individuals" (Tatum, 1997, p. 7). Racism combines prejudice with social power to systematically limit the access of specifically targeted groups to social, cultural, political, and economic power and resources. In the United States and in most places around the globe, the targets of racism are people of color.

Racial inequality is manifest on several planes. Perhaps most obvious and socially recognized are examples of race-based prejudice and discrimination enacted directly between individuals or groups. Most Whites are aware of *active racism* – blatant and intentional acts of bigotry and discrimination against people of color (Tatum, 1997, p. 11) – and examples of this form of racism (including race-based hate crimes and "Whites Only" policies) are what often come to mind for Whites when racism is mentioned (Wise, 2000). But interpersonal racism is more complex and manifests in more subtle, less

extreme forms which do not necessarily enter into White understanding. Less recognized is *passive racism* (Tatum, 1997) – subtle, commonplace forms of discrimination that may seem small or innocent but cumulatively have a powerful, negative impact. Sometimes called everyday racism (Trepagnier, 2006; Wise, 2000), manifestations of passive racism include "routine actions that often are not recognized by the actor as racist but that uphold the racial status quo" (Trepagnier, 2006, p. 3) such as laughing at racist jokes, being surprised or impressed when a person of color is educated, experienced, or "well spoken," allowing housing discrimination to go unchallenged because "they just wouldn't fit in," and leaving unquestioned the omission of people of color in content and authorship from school curriculum or library holdings. Passive racism is also demonstrated by avoiding or distancing oneself from race-related issues, having concern over being perceived as racist, and confusion about what "counts" as racist (Tatum, 1997, p. 11; Trepagnier, 2006, p. 6). Even more subtle and challenging to detect than passive racism are examples of *silent racism* – "the racist thoughts, images, and assumptions in the minds of white people" (Trepagnier, 2006, p. 1). Silent racism reflects the ways stereotypical images and paternalistic assumptions about race are embedded in White understandings of the world such that racial realities are warped and used to justify inequality.[4]

The expression of interpersonal racism can take many forms, but as with any hierarchy of social power, the unequal distribution of power and privilege does not manifest only through the direct interactions of individuals but also on a systemic, institutional level. It is this institutional aspect that makes racism (and other forms of oppression) so difficult to combat, because racism exists not only in the minds and actions of individuals but is also entrenched in the very structural foundations of society. *Institutional racism*, or the systemic nature of racism, includes institutional policies, practices, and structures that preference Whites while disadvantaging non-White populations. Often based on racial stereotypes and assumptions, such structures are supported by a long history of legally sanctioned and/or unchallenged racial prejudice and discrimination including cultural images and messages (including media) that under-represent or misrepresent racial groups (called *cultural racism* by Tatum, 1997, p.6), racial profiling, restrictive housing contracts and lending policies, and so forth. (For in-depth examples

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[4] Racism can also exist in the minds of people of color. This form of racism is typically called *internalized racism* (Tatum, 1997, p. 6) because it describes when people of color accept to some degree racist thoughts, images, stereotypes, and assumptions about their own group as true.

and discussion see, for example, Brown et al., 2003; Harris, 1996; and Oliver & Shapiro, 2002.) All such practices assert and work to maintain the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color. And because of racism's lengthy institutional history,

> [E]xisting inequalities are obscured and rendered nearly invisible. The existing [racist] state of affairs is considered neutral or fair, however unequal and unjust it is in substance. Although the existing state of inequitable distribution [of power and privilege] is the product of institutionalized white supremacy and economic exploitation, it is seen by whites as part of the natural order of things, something that cannot legitimately be disturbed. (Harris, 1996, p. 287-288)

Therefore, systemic racism makes it possible for individuals to benefit from an overall racist society without themselves engaging in direct racist action (Anderson & Collins, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). While most people of color recognize both institutional and interpersonal aspects of racism, Whites often describe racism as limited to personal prejudice (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 8), failing to recognize racism's other manifestations and their potential collusion in its maintenance.

When racism is routinely manifested actively, passively, silently, and institutionally, it is understandably problematic when social actors, particularly White people, only acknowledge racism's presence in blatant or intentional acts. Doing so fails to recognize the complexity of racism and its many manifestations. "Ignoring racism that is not hateful and intentional effectively hides the fact that white people perform acts of everyday racism.... [A]ssumptions – that racism is hateful and rare – deny that racism today is often unintended and routine" (Trepagnier, 2006, p. 3).

As a hierarchy of social power through which racial privilege is distributed, racism is far from simple. And yet, social identity is increasingly complicated because individuals are not marked by merely one identity marker, but by many. While each social marker, such as race or gender, is used to locate individuals and groups within a specific hierarchy of social dominance, the many distinct hierarchies within which we navigate merge and intersect, locating each individual within a larger, intricately complex social matrix, allowing individuals to simultaneously enact a uniquely multifaceted mix of socially privileged and socially disadvantaged positions (Combahee River Collective, 2003). The feminist theory of intersectionality, as this phenomenon is sometimes called, is a recognition that individual forms of oppression, including racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and so

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forth, do not function in isolation, but relate to one another in ways that cannot be understood by examining each form of oppression separately (Crenshaw, 1991). Many feminist theorists, particularly women theorists of color, have written extensively about intersectionality. The Combahee River Collective (2003), for example, wrote, "We... often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (p. 166). Intersectionality suggests that oppressions, rather than functioning separately, mutually construct one another (Collins, 2000b).

And yet, just as oppressions intersect, so do privileges. People who are socially recognized as White, middle-class, and heterosexual, for example, inhabit a social location in which multiple aspects of their identity are socially dominant, resulting in the accumulation of unearned social privilege and power from not only one aspect of their identity, but several. This does not mean, however, that such people may not also by oppressed as a result of other, socially subordinated identity markers. For example, despite my socially subjugated status as a woman, I still receive unearned social privilege because I am identifiable as White, middle-class, educated, and able-bodied. The disadvantages and inequalities socially inherited as a result of my gender are not cancelled out by the privileges and advantages garnered upon me as a result of my White racial identity and other identity markers. Rather, they coexist such that I, like all people, am privileged in some ways and targeted in others. Understanding the ways in which social power is granted or denied is complex but impacts life contexts, experiences, and choices (Byrne, 2006a; hooks, 2000; Roth, 2004).

Racial positionality – An adoption of feminist standpoint theory

A key concept to emerge within feminism in the United States during its second wave was an increased recognition that feminist theory and action must address the intersectionality of human identities, such that issues of sexism and patriarchy could not be understood without also working to understand how individuals' experiences are lived within multiple, simultaneous systems of domination and subordination, including systems of racism, classism, heterosexism, and imperialism (Anzaldúa, 1987; Combahee River Collective, 2003; Roth, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory, therefore, grounds itself in the belief that people construct knowledge from within the experiences of their complex social locations and contexts. In other words, "knowledge is always socially situated" (Harding, 2004, p. 7). As such, persons embodying different social markers and contexts understand the world differently because of distinctions between the social locations from which they construct knowledge.

Standpoint theory does not, however, suppose a post-modern form of relativism, in which there is no larger "truth" by which to understand and approach the social world. While standpoint theory deems the production of knowledge to be relative in relation to its source and context, it also theorizes concerning the relational consequences of knowledge constructed from positions of social dominance and the resulting impact on issues of equality. Standpoint theory contends that the knowledge and perspectives of socially dominant persons and groups is likely to perpetuate systems of inequality rather than disrupt them because such persons are often unable to recognize the ways in which their privilege oppresses others (Hartsock, 2004; hooks, 1993; Rich, 2003); the life socially privileged persons view as "normal" and to which they often feel entitled is a privileged existence when understood in the context of larger society. Socially privileged persons' general failure to recognize their own privilege makes it extremely challenging for them to identify and understand the true power relations between themselves and differentially situated social actors. Standpoint theorist Nancy C. M. Hartsock (2004) wrote, "[T]here are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible" (p. 36-37).

The implications of standpoint theory are clear for understanding the problematic nature of abiding by assumed ideas of "commonsense" and universal "Truth," as persons of privileged identities often do; if we accept the construct that knowledge is socially

situated and that persons receiving unearned privilege often fail to recognize the reality of the hierarchical relations of power that define their lives and the lives of others, then we must also accept that it is impossible for "official" knowledge-makers, the vast majority of whom embody multiple socially privileged identities, to fully remove the fingerprint of their context and history from the knowledge they produce and perpetuate, as many traditional scientists, researchers, and people in power claim to do. Critical inquiry continues to demonstrate that much of what we "know" is constructed by those situated atop systems of social dominance (see, for example: hooks, 2004; Keller, 1995; Loewen, 1995; Martin, 1999; Roth, 2004; Zinn, 2010). As a result, we must concede the possibility that knowledge accepted as "universal" may not be universal – but rather is socially situated – and that to assume its universality silences or erases the experiences and knowledge of those outside the hegemonic norm. To accept such knowledge uncritically contributes to the perpetuation of inequality, hierarchies of unearned social power, and the silencing of diverse experiences.

But, identifying and understanding knowledge and perspectives that more truthfully reflect and validate the experiences of all parties is extremely difficult, in large part due to the many-layered complexity of our own identities. As noted, while a person may be privileged in one capacity, he or she is likely marginalized in another. This complex intersection of identity components makes it possible to experience and acknowledge a limited vision of reality in the social spaces in which we receive privilege, while simultaneously constructing insight from which to build new, more complete knowledge in the social spaces in which we inhabit marginalized social positions. For example, reflecting on her work as an activist in the women's liberation movement, White, lesbian, feminist thinker Adrienne Rich (2003) wrote, "Marginalized through we have been as women, as white and Western makers of theory, we also marginalized others because our lived experience is thoughtlessly white" (p. 451). Despite her socially subjugated positions as both queer and a woman, the racial privilege Rich received in accordance with her White racial identity inhibited her from identifying some of the ways her actions served to marginalize people of color, both men and women. She went on to say, "My heart has been learning in a much more humble and laborious way, learning that feelings are useless without facts, that all privilege is ignorant at the core" (p. 455). Because her racially dominant social position allowed only a limited understanding of the ways race structures human interaction, she recognized that ignorance grounded in, commonplace to,

and accepted within racial privilege implicated her in the perpetuation of inequality and injustice, despite her desire and intention to end both, and in spite of the ways she experienced marginalization within other social categories.

As Rich's example demonstrates, feminist standpoint theory has direct applicability to theorizing the difficulty of Whites as racially privileged to recognize and confront racism, and it offers a springboard for interrogating the potential implications of multiple social privileges on one's capacity to perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality. (For a more in-depth dialogue exploring the complex challenges of disrupting systems of inequality when inhabiting multiple socially privileged identities, see Smith & Smith, 2002.)

It should be noted, however, that feminist standpoint theory does not necessitate that those possessing unearned social privileges have no capacity for understanding or promoting positive social change, nor that they are condemned to live entirely blind to the hegemonically oppressive nature of their Whiteness, middle-class status, or heterosexuality, for example. But to break from and defy the socially dominant frames of White supremacy, for example, requires ever vigilant self-reflection, dialogue within and across racial lines of difference, and intentional and continual action to counter unearned institutional privilege ascribed regardless of desire (Sleeter, 2000; Tatum, 1997). And even with such efforts, the likely outcome is failure, such that systems of racial inequality will be reinstated and reinforced and that White privilege will again be recentered, rather than decentered, in social discourse (Crozier et al., 2008; Reay et al., 2007; Reay et al., 2008; Thompson, 2003b). Feminist standpoint theory suggests that it is far more likely that Whites as the recipients of social power and privilege will perpetuate systems of racial inequality, rather than disrupt them. Even those who view themselves as well-intentioned proponents of equality are likely to contribute to the marginalization of others, in part due to their privilege-supported ignorance of others' oppression (Hobgood, 2000; hooks, 1993; Rich, 2003).[5]

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[5] A number of researchers problematize and theorize these concerns as they relate to race, White supremacy, and embodying Whiteness differently, including Aimee Carrillo Rowe and her work on a politics of relation (2005), Linda Martín Alcoff and her talk of White double consciousness (1998), and Audrey Thompson's work on White investments in antiracism (2003b) and the power of thinking about anti-racist change relationally (2003a). The works of Chela Sandoval (2004) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) also lend valuable insight on counter-hegemonic consciousness.

Whiteness – Personal and structural

Knowing that social knowledge privileges socially dominant identities and that those with social power and privilege often find it a challenge to recognize their own socially dominant position and the benefits it connotes, it is unsurprising that privilege is often left socially unmarked. In the study of race and racism, as social science researchers pay increased attention to the ways in which Whites understand their own racial identities, a reoccurring theme shows that Whites, either consciously or unconsciously, understand Whiteness to be the racial norm – the baseline standard to which all else is compared. Whites, then, often only use racial labels to describe the racial "other" – people of color – and for Whites, their own racial identity – their Whiteness – is left an unmarked, invisible identity, often only reflected upon with external prompting (Frankenberg, 1993; Lewis, 2004; McKinney, 2005). Ruth Frankenberg (1997) explained that "White people's conscious racialization of others does not necessarily lead to a conscious racialization of the White self.... [W]hiteness makes itself invisible precisely by asserting its normalcy, its transparency, in contract with the marking of others on which its transparency depends" (p. 6). When Whiteness is explicitly named and understood as the "set of [social] locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, more over, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6), being White is no longer left unmarked and invisible. "To speak of whiteness is... to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people – that, rather, racism shapes white people's lives and identities in a way that is inseparable from other facets of daily life" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6, emphasis in original). And yet, Whiteness as an "invisible" racial identity is consistent with most White adults' and children's understanding of self (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Tatum, 1997), often regardless of the ways other social identity components, such as class, gender, or sexuality, impact individuals' experiences and perspectives (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993). This does not mean, however, that all Whites are disconnected from an awareness of their own racial identity and the complex issues of racism and racial dominance that affect us all, but such racially self-aware Whites are not the norm (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; McKinney, 2005).

To further complicate our understanding of race and social structures in the United States, it is vital to recognize that individuals' attitudes and actions cannot be understood

in isolation from the institutional ideologies and structures in which they are embedded. Knowing knowledge and experience to be socially situated requires the recognition that one's context is both contemporary and heavily influenced by history and is both personal and framed within larger social institutions.

Tim Wise, a White anti-racist activist, wrote, "We are never merely individuals; we are never alone; we are always in the company, as uncomfortable as it sometimes can be, of others, in the past, of history. We become part of that history just as surely as it becomes part of us" (2008, p. 2). Researchers Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave (2001) explained further, writing:

> The political-economic, social, and cultural structuring of social existence is constituted in the daily practices and lived activities of subjects who both participate in it and produce cultural forms that mediate it. Claims that such relations lie at the heart of social investigation are at the same time claims that they are historical processes – that both the continuity and the transformation of social life are ongoing, uncertain projects. For us, one central analytical intention of social practice theory lies in inquiry into historical structures of privilege, rooted in class, race, gender, and other social divisions, as these are brought to the present – that is, to local, situated practice. In practice, material and symbolic resources are distributed disproportionally across socially identified groups and generate different social relations and perspectives among participants in such groups. With their impetus from the past, historical structures infuse and restrain local practices…. Historical structures also provide resources for participants and their practices and leave traces in their experiences. (p. 4-5)

Holland and Lave labeled this ongoing confluence between the past and the present and between social structures and personal participants in the ongoing processes of identity-making and meaning-making as "history in person" (p. 5).

Living in the United States, Whites are born into racial privilege that has accumulated through generations and is bestowed even before birth. The resulting racial benefits have nothing to do with the merit of individual Whites but rather the group identity to which they belong and to which is issued broad, contextual advantages regardless of personal experience or merit. Examples of advantages Whites receive as a result of unearned institutional privilege include typically having the ability to trace family history back through the centuries, receiving generational inheritance including property,

wealth, and access to quality education, and being the beneficiaries of centuries of laws and institutional practices that have enforced a sort of "White affirmative action" that has historically benefited (and continues to benefit) Whites seeking employment, education, housing, healthcare, and so on, often denying the same to the racially marginalized (Brown et al., 2003; Caron, 1998; Harris, 1996; Katznelson, 2005; Kennelly, 1999; Oliver & Shapiro, 2002; Razack, 1998; Roediger, 2005; Wise, 2008).

Wise (2008) also argued that inequality perpetuated by individuals persists because larger institutional structures and ideologies allow them to persist. For example, even though racial profiling is publicly frowned upon, it continues, in the actions of security guides at airports, clerks in retail stores, police in neighborhoods, and in employers seeking new workers. A non-descript, but all-powerful (and quite surely White) public voice *says* that as a society we discourage profiling, but actions speak differently as our personal and collective actions continue to judge individuals on the color of their skin. Similarly, there are individuals who break social norms, for example, building friendships or romantic relationships across color lines, living in truly integrated neighborhoods, seeking racially integrated faith communities, or lobbying for truly integrated schools and classrooms. Such individuals, both White and people of color, are likely to experience significant resistance and/or discrimination, because they are pushing forcibly against societal norms that expect them to enact their racial identities differently. In both the context of racial profiling and intentionally crossing racial lines or seeking racial justice, ideologies and structures larger than individuals influence their interactions with and understandings of the world. This does not mean that the intentions of individuals to pursue racial equality is without hope, but it does reinforce the reality that changed individuals alone are not enough; for lasting change, the social institutions and ideologies that support inequality must be dismantled and replaced by ideologies and structures in full support of equality for all.

Ideology of White supremacy

Ideas about race need to be understood within the context of societal ideologies rather than solely in relation to the attitudes and practices of individuals as if independent of their contexts. Ideologies can be understood as "those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence" (Hall, 1990, p. 8). They are belief systems shared by members of a social group that address broad, fundamental ways of understanding and participating in the world. "One of [ideologies'] cognitive functions is to provide (ideological) coherence to the beliefs of a group and thus facilitate their acquisition and use in everyday situations. Among other things, ideologies also specify what general cultural values (freedom, equality, justice, etc.) are relevant for the group" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 116). Ideologies are relatively stable over long periods of time, as they are acquired (and abandoned) gradually (Van Dijk, 2006), but they are not static (Rogers, 2004). Rather, they are malleable and shifting, being learned, shaped, and perpetuated within the larger context of society and culture. To be clear, ideologies are not the product of individuals (Van Dijk, 2006), but are a communally constructed and accepted set of beliefs that exist beyond the scope of individuals and find full expression only in the joined collective.

"Sometimes, ideologies become shared so widely that they seem to have become part of the generally accepted attitudes of an entire community, as obvious beliefs or opinion, or common sense" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 117). Ideologies work most effectively in contexts such as these where they seem "natural" and common-sense (Hall, 1990; Lewis, 2003), rather than being perceived as constructed or in need of interrogation. Seeming "natural," and thus unchangeable, is a powerful vantage point from which to function because ideologies are not merely innocent perspectives from which to understand the world. The ideas and meanings propagated by ideologies are integrally connected to the exercise of social power, and thus "the ideologies of the powerful are central in the production and reinforcement of the status quo" (Bonilla-Silver, 2006, p. 25). "The power of ideologies lies in their ability to facilitate collective domination in a way such that they often make vast inequalities understandable and acceptable to those at both the top and the bottom of the social order" (Lewis, 2003, p. 32). Thus, ideologies can facilitate the process of inequalities becoming socially accepted as "natural" or common-sense and, consequently, less likely to be contested.

Ideas about race and racism are one area in which social ideologies are evident, and the power with which ideologies are infused has significant impact on the beliefs and actions of those within society and on the ways that hierarchies of racial dominance and subordination are enacted. Racial ideologies are "the racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 9). Conflicting ideologies can contend for domination, but "the ruling ideology expresses as 'common sense' the interests of the dominant race, while oppositional ideologies attempt to challenge that common sense by providing alternative frames, ideas, and stories based on the experiences of subordinated races," (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 10). Thus, in seeking to shift the dominant ideology that shapes societally-endorsed beliefs and actions about race and racism, alternative ideological frames are not free to construct an entirely new perspective from which to engage the world. Rather they are bound to the dominant ideology as a frame of reference upon which their own ideological positions (in support or opposition) are built (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 9). Our racial status quo is maintained in large part because our dominant racial ideology expresses itself as "common sense" and remains broadly unquestioned, thus serving the interests of the dominant race and upholding a hierarchical system of power and privilege through the subordination of non-dominant racial groups.

In the United States (and arguably worldwide), our dominant racial ideology is the ideology of White supremacy. In race relations, "dominance is simply defined as the abuse of power with the goal of self-serving inequality" (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 97-98), and in a society whose dominant racial ideology is one of White supremacy, Whites receive unearned and unequal access to valued social resources, including power and privilege in the spheres of politics, law, economics, culture, knowledge-creation, body-politics, and metaphysics, among others (Mills, 2003). White supremacy, then, is "a political, economical, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (Ansley, 1989, p. 1024n).

Racial ideologies produce and reproduce a specific racial order, and in the United States all individuals are inextricably embedded within our society's dominant racial ideology of White supremacy. Anti-racist activist Tim Wise (2002) stressed that White

supremacy is not "out there;" rather it is our social baseline – the norm against which all other racial ideologies compete. He says, "We think of white supremacy as something preached by the Klan, skinheads, or neo-Nazis, rather than as the default position of American institutions since day one" (Wise, 2002, p. 227). Whether or not individuals benefit from, struggle against, or resign themselves to White supremacy, their attitudes on race are responses to or manifestations of that racialized social system. It is important to understand, however, that ideologies are themselves merely belief systems. It is through discourse and other social practices that ideologies are expressed, enacted, and reproduced (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 117).

At its most simple, discourse can be understood as language in use (Gee, 2004), such that when talking specifically about race, "[Racial discourse is] the way people talk about race, their racial vocabularies, racial narratives, and their definitions of racism" (Twine, 2000, p. 20). And discourse in its many forms matters because it has social power.

> None of us can see or deal with reality without words or other symbols. To discuss and debate – even to think about – reality we have to attach words to it. These words are… always connected to negotiable, changeable, and sometimes contested stories, histories, knowledge, beliefs, and values encapsulated into cultural models (theories) about the world. Nobody looks at the world other than through lenses supplied by language or some other symbol system. (Gee, 2008, p. 29)

Language is a lens through which we comprehend and participate in the world. Words are far more complex than their definitions alone. They are inextricably tied to social knowledge, meanings, and beliefs (Gee, 2008). They are socially constructed and socially situated manifestations of history, of culture and cultural models, and of ideologies.

Ideologies are lived, maintained, and reproduced through discourse – language in use – and yet ideologies are not enacted through discourse alone. Social practices, too, play a role. Social practices include actions, interactions, behaviors, etiquette, customs, cultural practices, and other ways of being, and they are inseparable from discourse. James Paul Gee, a leading researcher in social linguistics, explained saying, "[L]anguage in use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices, and… social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity, distribution of social goods, and power" (2004, p. 33). As Gee suggests,

discourse and social practices are intricately tied and both have ideological groundings reflected in the distribution of social power and privilege. "Ideologies are expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 115).

To better encapsulate the collaborative way language and social practices work together to enact ideological ways of being, Gee uses the word Discourse (with a capital "D") to describe "a distinctive way to use language *integrated* with 'other stuff'… [including] distinctive ways of thinking, being, acting, interacting, believing, knowing, feeling, valuing, dressing, and using one's body" (Gee, 2004, p. 46, emphasis in original), while reserving the word discourse (with a lower case "d") to mean only language in use. Offering a range of examples to demonstrate all that is encompassed within Discourse, discourse studies researcher Teun A. Van Dijk wrote:

> [D]iscourse is a multidimensional social phenomenon. It is at the same time a linguistic (verbal, grammatical) object (meaningful sequences or words or sentences), an action (such as an assertion or a threat), a form of social interaction (like a conversation), a social practice (such as a lecture), a mental representation (a meaning, a mental model, an opinion, knowledge), an interactional or communicative event or activity (like a parliamentary debate), a cultural product (like a telenovela), or even an economic commodity that is being sold and bought (like a novel). In other words, a more or less complete 'definition' of the notion of discourse would involve many dimensions and consists of many other fundamental notions. (2009, p. 67)

And more succinctly, "A Discourse is a whole package: a way of using not just words, but words, deeds, objects, tools, and so forth to enact a certain sort of socially situated identity" (Gee, 2004, p. 40).

In addition, Rebecca Rogers (2004) made the connection between Discourse, ideologies, and social power, saying:

> Discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society, which is why they are always and everywhere ideological.… They crucially involve a set of values and viewpoints about the relationships between people and the distribution of social goods… [and] about who is an insider and who is not, often who is "normal" and who is not. (p. 6 & 5)

As this applies to race, socially dominant Discourses reflect the ideology of White supremacy and benefit Whites as the dominant racial group in ideological and material ways.

> As much as white [people] are located in – and speak from – physical environments shaped by race, we are also located in, and perceive our environments by means of, a set of discourses on race, culture, and society whose history spans this century, and beyond it, the broader sweep of Western expansion and colonialism. The material and discursive dimensions of whiteness are always, in practice, interconnected. Discursive repertoires may reinforce, contradict, conceal, explain, or "explain away" the materiality or the history of a given situation. (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 2)

Ideology, enacted through Discourse, can be used to explain and justify racial inequality and injustice. And when we understand that individuals are embedded within their social contexts and that their attitudes on race are in part their own but are also manifestations of larger racial ideologies that function to produce and reproduce a specific racial order, then we must also understand that society and societal ideas are embodied and manifested in the beliefs and actions of individuals.

Individuals are never entirely independent or separated from larger social ideas, but always embedded in a larger context. We cannot be removed from our socially-situated identities, cultures, or histories, but they are brought to life through us. In considering the interplay between the personal and the societal in the formation of self, sociologist Anthony Elliott (2001) argued that:

> [S]elfhood is personally created, interpretively elaborated, and interpersonally constructed.... The self is not simply 'influenced' by the external world, since the self cannot be set apart from the social, cultural, political and historical contexts in which it is embedded.... Neither internal nor external frames of reference should be privileged; all forms of identity are astonishingly imaginative fabrications of the private and public, personal and political, individual and historical. (p. 6-7)

Each of us, then, is as much our own person as we are the embodiment of society. The two cannot be understood in isolation from one another. Thus, when applying the idea of our contextualized identities to thinking about race, identifying patterns among the experiences, beliefs, and practices of individuals – their Discourses – can serve to delineate the dominant racial ideologies that shape the lives and social relations of all

people within a larger cultural context (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Lewis, 2004).

In this study, I anticipate the potential enactment of at least four racial Discourses that support the maintenance of a larger ideology of White supremacy. These Discourses – a Discourse of color-blindness, a Discourse of meritocracy, a Discourse of accountability evasion, and a Discourse of individualism – function to justify and rationalize White supremacy, working to maintain its assumed common-sense nature and explain away the inequalities it perpetuates.

Discourse of color-blindness

Color-blindness[6] "explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 2). Gaining power in the late 1960s, color-blind racism is a newer, "kinder," and "gentler" White supremacy that often claims that racism ended with the Civil Rights Movement and that all people are now on racially equal footing. It seeks to deny the social consequences of race and instead blames inequality on cultural or economic differences (Lewis, 2003; Sleeter, 2000). By promoting the myth that race is no longer a factor in the lives of Americans, color-blind racism blames victims of racism for their own victimization, denies the history of institutional advantages that continue to benefit Whites, and refuses to acknowledge covert acts of everyday racism as "real" racism, reserving the term "racism" to describe only blatant and extreme acts of discrimination (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Wise, 2008).

In elaborating on the meaning and manifestations of color-blind racism, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006) wrote:

> Compared to Jim Crow racism, the ideology of color blindness seems like "racism lite." Instead of relying on name calling (niggers, Spics, Chinks), color-blind racism otherizes softly ("these people are human, too"); instead of proclaiming God placed minorities in the world in a servile position, it suggests they are behind because they do not work hard enough; instead of viewing interracial marriage as wrong on a straight racial basis, it regards it as "problematic" because of concerns over the children, location, or the extra burden it places on couples. Yet this new ideology has become a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order. (p. 3)

The ideological work of color-blind racism for Whites is multifold. Through the process of claiming that race is no longer important, Whites are able to maintain White privilege and power without seeming racist (Trepagnier, 2006, p. 21). U.S. sociologist Joe Feagin (2000) explained how a Discourse of color-blindness shapes the ways White individuals understand both the world around them and themselves, saying:

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[6] Like others before me, I do not prefer the term "color-blind" as it assumes ableist norms and offers a somewhat physiological label for what is a social, cultural, and political phenomena. Other researchers have more aptly named "color-blindness" as "color ignore-ance" (Applebaum, 2005, p. 288), "color evasiveness," or "power evasiveness" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 14). However, for the purpose of reviewing the literature I have maintained the terminology utilized by the researchers I reference.

> [W]hite adherents of the color-blind perspective… view blatant racial discrimination as rare and see U.S. institutions as basically healthy and color-blind. Indeed, many individual whites assert, disingenuously, that they "don't see race anymore, just individuals." Today, the color-blind ideology provides a veneer of liberality, which covers up continuing racist thought and practice that is often less overt and more disguised. (p.93)

Sociologists Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tyrone Forman (2000) also detailed some of the actions and beliefs that color-blindness justifies, writing:

> Color-blind racism allows Whites to appear 'not racist' ("I believe in equality!"), preserve their privileged status ("Discrimination ended in the sixties!"), blame Blacks [and other people of color] for their lower status ("If you guys just work hard!"), and criticize any institutional approach – such as affirmative action – that attempts to ameliorate racial inequality ("Reverse discrimination!"). (p. 78)

A Discourse of color-blindness also serves to support the maintenance of a racist status quo by making taboo the act of noticing or mentioning race and arguing the racist nature of anyone who does (Applebaum, 2005; Byrne, 2006b; Lewis, 2003). And yet, it is precisely through the denial of racism's existence (McKinney, 2005, p. 13) that the system of advantages garnered to Whites is perpetuated (Tatum, 1997, p. 9). Through the Discourse of color-blindness, "seeing race mean[s] being racist and being racist mean[s] being 'bad'… [A] person who is good cannot by definition be racist" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 147). Thus, under the guidance of a color-blind perspective, when seeking to avoid being seen as racist the safest action is inaction – to do nothing, see nothing, and say nothing as related to race (Byrne, 2006b, p. 76, 78).

In addition, most Whites fail to recognize the racist contexts in which they are already embedded, and "[s]ince white supremacist attitudes and values permeate every aspect of the culture, most white folks are unconsciously absorbing the ideology of white supremacy. Since they do not realize this socialization is taking place, many of them feel that they are not racist" (hooks, 1995, p.267). Believing that they weren't raised as supporters of or engagers in racism and maintaining that they do not currently see race, Whites deny both the presence and the consequences of racism. Thus, their denial of race and racism allows the unhindered perpetuation of White supremacy. Wise (2008) summarized this racial positioning, saying, "[W]hite folks all around the nation sometimes

mistake being civil and kind and 'nice' with actually doing something to end injustice" (p. 86).

As a color-blind approach is adopted formally and informally throughout society – in admissions and hiring programs, in school curricula, in parenting practices, and so forth – the consequences are dire. While it has been assumed by many that color-blindness promotes inclusion, tolerance, and racial equality, the reality is far less positive.

> [O]ur findings raise distressing practical implications, including the possibility that well-intentioned efforts to promote egalitarianism via color blindness sometimes promote precisely the opposite outcome, permitting even explicit forms of racial discrimination to go undetected and unaddressed. In doing so, color blindness may create the false impression of an encouraging decline in racial bias, a conclusion likely to reinforce its further practice and support. Despite this perception of tangible progress toward equality, however, color blindness may not reduce inequity as much as it adjusts the lens through which inequity is perceived and publicly evaluated. (Apfelbaum et al., 2010, p. 1591)

The adoption of a Discourse of color-blindness depresses the recognition and reporting of racial injustice, as well as marking acts of resistance as unnecessary. So while individuals and groups may perceive a decrease in racial discrimination, a color-blind approach actually allows racism, even in blatant forms, to persist. Advocating an alternative course of action in defiance of rampant color-blindness, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) advised that "[w]e must unmask color-blind racists by showing how their views, arguments, and lifestyles are (White) color-coded. We must also show how their color-blind rationales defend systemic White privilege" (p. 78).

Discourse of meritocracy

Meritocracy is "based on the belief that individuals succeed or fail according to their own merit" (Lewis, 2003, p. 32) and denies the importance of one's social position within historically unequal social structures to impact life choices and opportunities (Applebaum, 2005; Lewis, 2003). Meritocracy is synonymous with a bootstraps mentality ("All ya gotta do it pull yourself up by your bootstraps!") which presupposes that with enough hard work and determination an individual can accomplish anything. Meritocracy contends that one's social positioning in our complex matrix of historically constructed and contemporarily maintained social hierarchies of power and privilege is irrelevant and should be ignored. Individuals should be judged on their own merits alone, with no credence given to unearned advantages or disadvantages bestowed upon them by their social identity and positioning. Those who adhere to a Discourse of meritocracy believe that "persistent racial inequalities in income, employment, residence, and political representation cannot be explained by white racism.... As they see it, the problem is the lethargic, incorrigible, and often pathological behavior of people who fail to take responsibility for their own lives" (Brown et al., 2003, pg. 6).

Meritocracy grants permission for consistent patterns of social inequality to be blamed on individuals as intrinsic, personal failures and allows adherents to ignore any role played by larger social structures that might frame or contribute to inequalities that disadvantage specific groups. Meritocracy centers one's success or failure entirely on his or her own efforts, to the dismissal of all other factors. "[I]f one believes that everyone's life outcomes are a result of individual merit, then it is easy to conclude that those who fail to achieve have only themselves to blame" (Applebaum, 2005, p. 286). A Discourse of meritocracy allows inequality to be blamed on the perceived moral or cultural failure of individuals or groups rather than on discrimination perpetrated by others and larger social structures. Meritocracy dismisses White supremacy as a contributor to racial inequality. In fact, meritocracy denies racial inequality.

> The discourse of meritocracy functions to marginalize certain groups of people by allowing whites to direct attention away from their own privilege and to ignore larger patterns of racial injustice. The assumption that people get ahead as a result of individual effort or merit conceals how social, economic and cultural privileges facilitate the success of some groups or people but not others. (Applebaum, 2005, p. 286)

Meritocracy is antithetical to an understanding of racism as a complex system of advantage and power based on race (Tatum, 1997, p. 9).

Parent and educator Staci Swenson (1996) wrote about the social consequences of a Discourse of meritocracy and its impact on her parenting intentions. She said:

> [P]arents must be careful not to reinforce themes of meritocracy. Children (and adults as well) are constantly fed the myth that our capitalist society equally distributes rewards based on merit… reflect[ing] the moral "if you try hard, you will succeed" and "if you believe with all your heart, you can make your dreams come true." Such simplistic meritocracy is the basis on which western hegemonic culture, including schools in the United States, is founded. It is also the lie by which society and American institutions perpetuate sexism, racism, classism, and other oppressive ills. This optimistic dogma places the burden of overcoming oppression on the oppressed and not on the oppressors. Essentially, meritocracy is indirect victim-blaming and lets oppressors off the hook…. [M]erit is by no means a guarantee of success or rewards. (p. 55)

A Discourse of meritocracy works in collaboration with a Discourse of color-blindness to support rather than challenge stereotypes and lies about people of color that result in the perpetuation of systems of racial inequality.

Discourse of accountability evasion

What I term "accountability evasion" is based on the claim that individuals cannot be held responsible for the unintended outcomes of personal choices they make or for the historical consequences of choices made by past generations. This Discourse denies two important factors. First, that we all live deeply relational lives such that our lives impact the lives of others and vice versa (Applebaum, 2005; Wise, 2008). And second, that we are all "in and of history" (Wise, 2008, p. 98) and unable to extract ourselves from its impact on our lives (Holland & Lave, 2001). Quite to the contrary:

> [T]he great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is *literally* present in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. (Baldwin, 1998, p. 321, emphasis in original)

Working to remove individuals from their historical and interpersonal contexts, a Discourse of accountability evasion functions to erase one's obligation to address their own unintended acts of racism or the consequences of past racist actions (personal or systemic) on present-day lives.

The illogical and deceptive nature of a Discourse of accountability evasion is easy to spot when applied to everyday occurrences. For example, if I make the decision to drive drunk and my actions result in an accident, there would be no excusing my guilt, even if I say, "But I didn't *mean* to cause an accident." I would be held accountable – by individuals and by the law – for the destructive results of my actions. Similarly, if I accept a new job, filling the vacancy of a past employee, I am responsible to deal with the institutional history of the position – its successes and failures. I may not have originated the position or contributed to its current state, but I inherited its present-day reality and am accountable by my supervisor and/or company to move forward, impacted in whatever way that I am by the position's history. In both examples, the reality that I live relationally with others and that I am inextricably embedded in a history from which I cannot remove myself is clear.

Despite its failure to eradicate the need for personal accountability in the previous examples, when applied to issues of race and racism, a Discourse of accountability evasion is used to justify White supremacy by working to ignore the relational and historically-contextualized nature of humanity. For example, when called out on a racist

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act, Whites often say, "But I didn't mean for you to be offended." They are attempting to evade responsibility for the offense that they did cause, whether intentional or not. Similarly, when White Americans says, "But my family didn't own any slaves, so why are you getting so angry with me?!" they are trying to ignore that they are embedded in history and are the inheritors of its consequences, even if they don't like it. By focusing primarily on their own individual choices and intentions, individuals are able to claim innocence and deflect the responsibility to do the hard work of changing personal actions and social structures that perpetuate inequality.

> And yet, psychologist and educator Beverly Daniel Tatum wrote:

> [N]one of us is completely innocent. Prejudice is an integral part of our socialization, and it is not our fault.... [W]e are not at fault for the stereotypes, distortions, and omissions that shaped our thinking as we grew up. To say that it is not our fault does not relieve us of responsibility, however. We may not have polluted the air, but we need to take responsibility, along with others, for cleaning it up. Each of us needs to look at our own behavior.... Unless we engage in... conscious acts of reflection and reeducation, we easily repeat the process with our children. We teach what we were taught. The unexamined prejudices of the parents are passed on to the children. It is not our fault, but it is our responsibility to interrupt this cycle. (1997, p. 7)

Denying this responsibility is the work of accountability evasion.

A Discourse of accountability evasion also works such that Whites who may begin to feel a sense of responsibility for the racist reality around them feel that a sense of guilt is all that is needed to be absolved of racism and its consequences. If one demonstrates their regret with enough guilt, than no other action need be taken. James Baldwin (1998) wrote that when Whites open their eyes to the reality of history – one in which the oppressed have oppressors and the underprivileged are paralleled by the overpriviledged (Wise, 2008, p. 63) – that:

> [W]hat they see is an appallingly oppressive and bloody history known all over the world. What they see is a disastrous, continuing, present condition which menaces them, and for which they bear an inescapable responsibility. But since in the main they seem to lack the energy to change this condition they would rather not be reminded of it.... The guilt remains, more deeply rooted, more securely lodged, than the oldest of fears. (p. 320)

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And for some, the guilt is used to stagnate any other possibility for action. Guilt is framed as being enough to alleviate the need for any other reparations. A Discourse of accountability evasion allows guilt to stand in for actual anti-racist efforts and supports instead the unchallenged perpetuation of White supremacy. Swenson (1996) wrote:

> Racism is the problem of… white[s]… who feel guilty because they don't know what else to do…. [O]ften whites expect people of color to "solve" racism, so that we, as privileged whites, will not be burdened by such guilt – but they are not accountable for the solution. We whites are the ones who have caused racism's existence. If we whites collectively chose to give up our privilege and demanded an end to discrimination, it would be eliminated. Yet rather than forgo such comfortable unearned extras, white[s]… often want to relieve their need for responsibility and action with guilt. They believe, much as I used to, that if we feel guilty, we do not need to be responsible for our position as oppressors. We use feelings, and verbalizations of these feelings of guilt, to assuage our need to take responsibility and to effect change. (p. 60)

Whether Whites feel guilty or deny altogether their responsibility to make reparations for the consequences of racism, a Discourse of accountability evasion supports them in their denial of racism's real power.

Discourse of individualism

A Discourse of individualism foregrounds the interests, needs, and desires of the individual and those closest to him or her before a sense of commitment or responsibility to the welfare of a larger community. Within the Discourse, "[t]he self-interested and self-sufficient individual remains ideal.... [T]he centering of rational choice... occludes group-based harms of systemic oppression and conceals the complicity of individuals in the perpetuation of systemic injustices" (Reay et al., 2008, p. 239). Believing that one is only obligated to foster their own prosperity and success, they are relieved of any responsibility for the well-being of others or society as a whole. Individualism works to foster the belief that achievement and survival are best attained independently rather than as a member of a team, group, culture, or society.

> Researchers typically describe cultures as either individualistic or collectivistic.
> Whereas individualistic-oriented communities are thought to emphasize self-growth and individual well-being, collectivistic-oriented communities are thought to emphasize the good of the larger community of which one is a member. Thus, researchers contend that individuals in collectivist cultures..., conscious that their actions reflect upon the larger group, consider the repercussions of their actions for the family or larger community before acting. In contract, those in more individualistic communities primarily consider the consequences of their actions for the self. (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008, p. 187)

While research shows that value systems of individualism and collectivism can coexist (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008), it is generally agreed that most (though not all) Westernized nations emphasize goals of autonomy over goals of relatedness (Small, 1998; Small, 2001; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008). Autonomy is often expressed through a valuing of personal choice, being intrinsically motivated, having high self-esteem, and seeking self-maximization, while relatedness is brought to bear through a connection to the family, an orientation to the larger group, and an emphasis on respect and obedience (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2008).

In the United States, individualism is valued socially and politically (Small, 1998) and is seen as a key component for pursuing success, individually and socially. Just as individualism finds expression in the lives of individuals, it is also expressed culturally. In the United States, we have seen the rise of social individualism in the increase of

privatization, consumerism, and a capitalist market economy (Reay et al., 2008; Smalls, 1998).

What is concerning about this focus on individualism is the evidence that as the social significance of individualism increases, the social commitment to community and collectivism declines. Discussing their research on social class and Whiteness in the United Kingdom, Diane Reay and colleagues (2008) wrote:

> What has increasingly been marginalized in white middle class identity formation is civic commitment and a sense of communal responsibility.... Values of the market, choice and individualism increasingly stand out and over those of the fragile discourse of welfare... [to] generate an ethical framework that encourages and legitimates self-interest in the pursuit of competitive familial advantage. (p. 239)

Describing the decline of a community-oriented ethos, they continued:

> Community has always been a morally charged concept because it is about the obligations to, and expectations of, individuals one lives closest to. It links personal responsibility, commitment and identification with people other than the family. However... there is seen to have been a demise of community dating from the 1980s.... [C]ommunities, and particularly those in the inner city, no longer work as a conduit for social activity, commitment and collective action.... In the twenty first century we still have powerful imagined communities but there is scant empirical evidence that communities rooted in the local with the power to reach across class and ethnic boundaries still exist. People may share neighbourhood [sic] as a living space but this does not mean they will interact together as a community. (p. 246)

As a Discourse of individualism gains power, individuals become less connected to and less concerned about others sharing their larger contexts. In a society already replete with racism, individualism supports apathy towards engaging in anti-racist work unless it appears to provide direct benefits and advantages to one's self or one's closest connections. This increased "Army of one" and "It's all about me and what I want" orientation coincides with a decrease in communitarianism and permits the unprotested perpetuation of White supremacy.

The Discourses of color-blindness, meritocracy, accountability evasion, and individualism are a powerful quartet that work together to support an ideology of White supremacy. Color-blindness denies the importance of race. Meritocracy seeks to ignore the importance of social location and the role of history for impacting racism. Accountability evasion rejects the relational nature of all people and the importance of history in modern lives. And individualism foregrounds personal wants, desires, and successes while downplaying individuals' connection to and role in the larger society's well-being. Together the Discourses frame social thoughts, beliefs, values, actions, cultural representations, and ways of being in patterns that seek to justify, rationalize, and normalize White supremacy and the inequalities it perpetuates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parenting as socialization

Understanding that societal structures and ideologies, including their hierarchies of privilege and power, are produced, reproduced, and shared from one generation to the next, there are many social practices and contexts through which racial meanings and the current unequal racial order can be studied. Parenting is one such cultural site, as it offers specific practices and ideologies through which messages about the nature of the social world are offered to children (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 2007).

In the introduction to their edited book focused entirely on addressing the complexities of socialization, Joan Grusec and Paul Hastings (2007) wrote:

[Socialization is] the way in which individuals are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups.... Socialization involves a variety of outcomes, including the acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values across the social, emotional, cognitive, and personal domains. Some outcomes are deliberately hoped for on the part of agents of socialization while others may be unintended side effects of particular socialization practices.... Socialization can also occur through many paths (e.g., discipline after deviation, modeling, proactive techniques, routines, rituals, and as a function of styles of interaction between the agent of socialization and the individual participating in the socialization process). Socialization is ongoing through the life course and can be accomplished by a variety of individuals including parents, teachers, peers, and siblings, as well as by schools/daycare, the media, the Internet, and general cultural institutions. (p. 1-2)

When reflecting upon the socialization of children, it is generally acknowledged that young children are socialized though a complex array of relationships with family, peers, educators, media, and so forth, but parents are generally accepted as extremely influential in children's early socialization (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 1992; Williams, n.d.).

Parenting and socialization are now generally recognized as bidirectional, reciprocal processes in which adults *and* children are active agents in their own socialization and the socialization of one another, dynamically responding to one another's behavior and adapting their own behavior accordingly (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Maccoby, 2007; Small, 2001). And yet, despite children's recognized agency within the socialization process, adults are typically acknowledged as the carriers of

values, knowledge, and attitudes that are intended for transmission to younger generations. Thus, embedded in the concept of socialization by adults and of children is a power dynamic that is based on age and experience, offering a privileged position to adults and placing greater authority and responsibility on the efforts of the agent (the adult) than on the contributions of the recipient (the child). In parenting, adults are typically viewed as the dominant socializers within families, seeking to raise children who ascribe to the ideas, values, beliefs, and expectations conveyed to them, intentionally or unintentionally, by their parental figures.

Parents' socialization efforts are seen as framing children's understanding of what is "right" or "wrong" and what is deemed "acceptable" or "normal" behaviors, interactions, and experiences for members of the social group(s) with which they are affiliated (Vygotsky, 1978; Small, 2001). The process of socialization offers boundaries, structures, and routines which frame children's understanding and evaluation of the world, and thus their engagements within it. As such, one purpose of socialization is to provide a context for group identification or, in other words, to provide boundaries for defining in-group and out-group distinctions (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Small, 2001).

As one example, children in the United States are typically socialized to value and strive for autonomy and independence. In her research examining parenting practices around the world and throughout history, anthropologist Meredith Small (1998) discussed the manifestation of individualism and independence in parenting patterns in the United States (particularly among White, middle-class families), writing:

> The chief, overriding parental goal of American culture, whether stated overtly or not, is independence. In every study in which American parents are compared to other cultures, even other industrialized nations, American parents expressed over and over again the need to make a child independent and self-reliant. This goal matches neatly with the economic, social, political, and geographical structure of American society…. The independent self-reliant individual is one of the strongest ideological threads running through American culture and history. (p. 103-104)

As such, personal traits of autonomy, self-reliance, personal choice, and intrinsic motivation are valued and are propagated as "good," "normal" character traits. To value alternative ways of being – community dependency, obedience to power, and an orientation towards the group before the self – can mark one as a social or cultural outsider.

A great deal of attention has been paid in social science research to the role of parents in the socialization process of children, frequently delineating categorical parenting styles or parenting types and their correlate effects on socialization outcomes (for a review of the research, see: Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 2007). But an examination of parenting styles is not equivalent, though may perhaps be complimentary, to examining parenting worldviews, intentions, and belief systems themselves, as similar parenting goals may be exhibited or pursued through a number of differing parenting styles. Examining the narratives of White, middle-class, heterosexual parents, then, serves to identify and consider their explicit and embodied views and beliefs on parenting – not their parenting style or type – and the ways in which they endeavor to contribute to the socialization of their children – specifically their child(ren)'s adoption of ideologies concerning the acceptance of or resistance to existing social hierarchies of racial power.

With the understanding that context, including social identities, impacts parenting, and thus the messages shared with children intentionally and unintentionally in the process of socialization, it is important to question and explore how families in varying social positions and contexts – as influenced by culture, economics, race, ethnicity, and so forth – may enact different approaches to the socialization of their children and may prioritize different socialization goals within their parenting practices. Seeking to understand some of these socially situated differences and the foundations sustaining them can be helpful for understanding the similarities and differences in parents' socialization intentions and practices across social groups.

White social positionality and racial socialization

Research shows that adults' social identities, including their individually chosen and/or socially ascribed markers of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and geographic location, influence the socialization messages upon which they place the greatest priority or salience in the process of raising children, including messages communicated about racial identities, human differences, and interpersonal interactions (Byrne, 2006a; Crozier et al., 2008; Hamm, 2001; Reay et al., 2007; Reay et al., 2008; Reddy, 1996a). If one purpose of socialization is, as Grusec and Davidov (2007) suggest, for parents to provide the foundation through which children gain group affiliation or belonging, it is appropriate to consider the foundations being built concerning persons *beyond* the bounds of one's own group membership. Gordon Allport (1954) argued that feeling affinity for one's own group, while often accompanied by a sense of pride, allegiance, and assumed superiority, does not dictate a corollary feeling of enmity towards those not of one's own group. Marilynn Brewer (1999), however, warned that as group size grows and affiliation becomes depersonalized, that distinctions between in-group and out-group memberships, rather than being seen as merely different, become viewed hierarchically, as better than, worse than, and/or threatening to one another. This ranking of group affiliations – reflecting as it does our currently dominant social structures – can serve as the foundation for discrimination, oppression, and conflict between groups based on socialized understandings of group values, beliefs, attitudes, and ideals rather than on personal experience or interaction.

Yet, social science research that documents and seeks to explain the parenting intentions and practices of differently situated families is prone to significant gaps. In the United States, research addressing the parenting practices of people of color around issues of race and racism is plentiful, offering a growing body of literature studying the socialization intentions and practices within communities of color (Hughes, 2006; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). If we look for similarly strong bodies of literature addressing the racial socialization practices within White families, we discover that such research is nearly nonexistent (Hamm, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006). Much of the available research seeks, appropriately, to emphasize group strategies among communities of color for socializing children who are likely to be the recipients of racial discrimination and racism (Hamm, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006; Tatum, 1997), a goal not often present in similarly situated White families (Hamm, 2001; Wise, 2008). This difference suggests that the

salience of addressing issues of diversity with children may be correlated to issues of social power based on group membership. Those with less social power – people of color – are more likely than those with more social power – Whites – to place a high priority on socializing their children to have knowledge of and strategies to address the social inequalities manifest in their lives.

As example, in a review of peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters published between 1975 and 2005 addressing parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices (Hughes et al., 2006), only three of the forty-five reviewed studies addressed parenting practices within families who had White members, and of those three studies, one dealt with the adoption of African-American children by European-American parents, one dealt with biracial youth (of mixed White and Black heritage), and the third compared the socialization of African-American and White girls. Hughes et al. (2006) said, "[A]lthough White parents are rarely included in studies of socialization about ethnicity and race…, such socialization is quite likely to take place within White families" (p. 748-749). Why then this relative silence in research about the approaches of White families to socializing their children around issues of racial diversity?

Some argue that the predominant focus on non-White parenting populations is an effort to fill gaps in academic knowledge about populations traditionally deprived of social privilege and social voice, and while I agree completely and recognize the great importance of documenting and sharing knowledge about the practices of diverse racial and ethnic populations, the lack of data describing the socialization practices of White parents around issues of race is troubling and reflective of both the invisibility and assumed normalcy of White racial parenting practices. Jill Hamm (2001) suggested that, "This dearth of research is likely symptomatic of White parents' position of privilege as members of the dominant cultural group…. White families' membership in the culturally defining group has created a historical privilege that obviates the need to address issues of cultural diversity in raising their children" (p. 67). Whether White parents actively or passively confer messages about race and racial dominance and marginalization to their children, their practices have drawn little attention from researchers, demonstrating *again* the ways in which Whiteness is left unmarked and assumed to be the social norm.

Ruth Frankenberg (1993) wrote of the need, then, to explicitly name Whiteness, to clearly mark it so as to differentiate it from "the norm." She said, "Naming 'whiteness' displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance"

(p.6). When we name Whiteness, everyone is given a place in the racial order and it is easier to acknowledge that all people are affected by race and racism. As such, if some racial groups are studied in efforts to document their socialization practices around issues of race, then the racial socialization practices of *all* racial groups, including Whites, should be considered viable research sites, abiding by the caveat that the practices and ideologies being researched are clearly marked and analyzed in accordance to the populations whom they reference.

As we've noted, research demonstrates that parents' own identities and life contexts shape the socialization messages that they prioritize with their children. For parents who view race and ethnicity with more salience, they are likely to have stronger convictions about the racial-ethnic knowledge and attitudes they would like their children to adopt, and they prioritize their parenting intentions and practices accordingly (Hamm, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006). The experiences of families of color in the United States suggest that parents of color have little choice as to whether or not to address issues of race with their children because of the socially subjugated position into which people of color are placed in our society. Parents of color have little choice but to talk with their children about issues of race and racism (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Tatum, 1997). In contrast, from what little research exists on the parenting practices of White adults around issues of race and racism, it is suggested that the norm among White families is a lack of direct socialization about race and the role race plays in structuring people's lives (Byrne, 2006b; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Describing the practices of White, middle-class mothers in London, Bridget Byrne (2006b) wrote, "[the women] did not consciously play a role in directing their children's vision or understanding [of race]. It would seem that there was nothing for a parent to do but to step back and keep quiet" (p. 76). The description Louise Derman-Sparks and Patricia Ramsey (2006) provide of Whites in the United States is remarkably similar in its depiction of silence and inaction:

> Unfortunately, for most whites, neither their education nor their life experiences provide the knowledge, analysis, and critical thinking skills about racism and other 'isms' to create a solid foundation for doing AB/MC [anti-bias/multicultural] work. They lack role models who openly and directly talk about race and racism (or other forms of diversity and inequalities) with adults or children. Indeed, most whites are raised with silence on these topics, with the tacit message that such conversations are neither appropriate nor polite. (p. 12)

In 2007 a group of researchers set out to gather data on exactly how often families explicitly discuss issues of race and ethnicity with their young children. They collected data from 17,372 families in the United States who had a child enrolled in Kindergarten. They asked the question "How often does someone in your family talk with [your child] about (his/her) ethnic/racial identity?" and adults could respond saying "never," "almost never," "several times a year," "several times a month," or "several times a week or more." 45 percent of families said that they never or almost never discuss race-related issues with their children. But among White families, 75 percent said they never or almost never talk about race. The data showed that families of color were over three times more likely to discuss race with their children than White families. The researchers said, "This finding demonstrates the contemporary consequence of ethnicity and race as stratifying statuses because families with the most cultural and economic capital in U.S. society (i.e., Whites) were least likely to socialize their children regarding ethnicity and race" (Brown, et al., 2007, p. 20).

But even without direct socialization, Whites still learn to enact specific, socially dominant racial positions. Debra Van Ausdale and Joe R. Feagin (2001) wrote:

> [W]hites learn to do racism — to think, feel, and act in racist ways — within a social and historical context, while those who are not white learn that they must constantly contend with racial hostility and mistreatment in their everyday lives.... Much racial socialization is unconscious, however, barely discernable to [whites] as a component of everyday life. Thus, the unearned privileges and benefits of being white are undiscovered by most and denied by virtually all. (p. 31-32)

In many situations, this inattention to issues of race is supported by the predominantly White social environments in which many Whites are embedded. Most Whites in the United States live highly segregated lives, attending predominantly White schools, living in highly racially segregated neighborhoods, involved in predominantly White social activities, and engaged in friendships and relationships with mostly other White people (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993; Kozol, 2005; Lewis, 2003; McKinney, 2005; Tatum, 2007). bell hooks (1995) suggested that this segregation reflects, in part, on adoption of White supremacist ideologies. She said:

> [M]any white people who see themselves as non-racist are comfortable with lives where they have no contact with black people [or other people of color] or where fear is their first response in any encounter with blackness. This "fear" is the first

sign of the internalization in the white psyche of white supremacist sentiments. It serves to mask white power and privilege. (p. 267-268)

The combination in most Whites' lives of a general lack of direct socialization around issues of race and involvement in highly racially segregated social environments supports what a number of theorists argue is the dominant racial ideology within the United States – White supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Lewis, 2003). If the modern manifestations of White supremacy are to be dismantled and efforts in full and open support of equality are to be made, fundamental shifts would be required – both individually and institutionally – in the attitudes and practices of many, but most especially of Whites. As Sherene H. Razack (1998) wrote, "The daily realities of oppressed groups can only be acknowledged at the cost of the dominant group's belief in its own natural entitlement. If oppression exists, then there must also be oppressors, and oppressors do not have a moral basis for their rights claims" (p. 23). Wise (2008) agreed, writing, "It is precisely the collision between the rhetoric of equality and the crushing evidence of inequality and injustice that has, in other words, necessitated white denial" (p. 64). Whether by intention or complicity, Whites are socialized into a position of unearned racial privilege and power, a position maintained in large part by White silence around the process and its consequences.

But the possibility of Whites learning to enact their racial identities differently is far from unproblematic, in large part because of the socially privileged position from which Whites fail to recognize the unjust consequences of their social dominance. A group of researchers in the United Kingdom are in the process of investigating the ways in which White, middle-class, urban parents in the U.K. who see themselves as distinctly different from the White racial norm enact their privileged identities in the process of making school choice decisions (Crozier et al., 2008; Reay et al., 2007; Reay et al., 2008), and their findings help to demonstrate the difficulties of resisting dominant social ideologies of race. Diane Reay and colleagues (2008) explained:

> Our research focuses on those [white] middle classes who think and act otherwise in order to uncover some of the commitments and investments that might make for a renewed and reinvigorated democratic citizenry. The parents in the study stand out against the normative white middle class practices because… they are choosing not to use their [race and class] privilege as much as they might. (p. 252)

The researchers' findings show that while the parents in their study see tolerance, racial understanding, and proximity to people of color as important goals for the raising of their children, the enactment of these attitudes often serves to reinforce the already existing, unequal social order. Reay and colleagues (2007) explained:

> [While white, middle-class parents] position themselves as 'other' to what they perceive to be normative white middle-class attitudes and behaviour, often denouncing and always putting moral distance between themselves and the white middle-class majority… they and their children inevitably constitute 'the privileged other' in the disadvantaged, multi-ethnic spaces that they opt for, at perpetual risk of becoming enmeshed in a colonialist sense of entitlement. (p. 1042-1043)

The research makes clear that parents' desire for exposing their children to diversity does not presume a parallel investment in equality. Reay and colleagues (2007) wrote, "[D]iversity all too often is not associated with challenging disadvantage but becomes yet another way of doing advantage" (p. 1051). Crozier and fellow researchers (2008) came to the same conclusions, saying, "The paradox for these middle-class parents… lies in their actions being both 'emancipatory', wanting to do the egalitarian right thing and yet at the same time maintaining and enhancing their social position" (p. 268). Parents speak of the desire to support public education as an institution for everyone and encourage an environment of multiculturalism, but these desires do not transfer to a longing to recognize and challenge the social systems that provide them unearned institutional privilege while forcing others into positions of subjugation.

Thus, we clearly see the ways in which White families' ideologies about race, even when they appear progressive, can allow them to act in collusion with existing, unequal hierarchies of power. All that is needed to maintain racism is the status quo. And thus, despite parents' verbalized intention to do otherwise, their children can be socialized into behaviors and practices that reinforce racial inequality and injustice.

Despite this harsh reality, Reay and her colleagues (2008) suggested that some grace be extended to White, middle-class individuals in their failure to disrupt systems of inequality because:

> [I]t is important to remind ourselves that these parents are negotiating an impossible situation that individually they can do little to improve. They are left with the quandary of trying to behave ethically in a situation which is structurally unethical (in terms of entrenched inequalities), and radically pluralistic (in terms of

different moralities and value systems).... When the white middle classes make choices that are directed towards the common good, greater benefits and value still accrue to them rather than to their class and ethnic others. This is a case of [being] trapped in privilege. (p. 1054 & 1055)

Unable to break from their privileged identities and the institutions and racial ideologies that support them, White middle-class families, as standpoint theory suggests, are ill-positioned to act in a way that counters current power structures and supports a more egalitarian world.

This does not suggest that Whites can be divided into categories of "good Whites" and "bad Whites"; they cannot. Being born into Whiteness is not a choice, but individuals do have agency to make choices within their own lives as to how they participate in the world. Anti-racism and the pursuit of equality are not destinations, but rather unbounded journeys. So while the families in the U.K. studies may not have enacted their racial identity in ways that opposed institutional racial ideologies or supported full equality that does not mean that their actions hold no merit in marking progress along a journey towards greater racial equity.

We know that parents' socialization efforts, filtered through their social identities and social positionalities, vary in the salience they ascribe to instilling children with an awareness of and positive responsiveness to racial difference. Those most likely to address the impact of race in their socialization efforts are those least likely to receive privilege or benefit because of their racial group membership (Hamm, 2001). And for Whites committed to offering their children exposure to the vastness of human diversity, including racial differences, such a commitment does not connote a commitment to equality, in that equality requires the destruction of institutional, as well as personal, ideologies and practices that protect racial inequality and injustice.

As adults raise children, their parenting ideologies and practices are influenced by the positions of privilege and power they hold (or do not hold) in society and the impact those vantage points have on their values, beliefs, attitudes, ideals, and actions. The ways in which we socialize our children concerning issues of human difference impact the relations that exist between groups and whether those relations are ones of perceived threat and hierarchy or relations of difference without judgment and rank.

Young children and race

In U.S. society, particularly among Whites, two strongly held beliefs about children and racial prejudice frame much of what the general public believes and how they engage issues of race with children. First, young children are believed to be innocently "color-blind"; they are thought to have little knowledge or understanding of either race or racism and believed not to notice racial differences unless pointed out explicitly. And second, it is assumed that children will remain free of racial bias unless explicitly taught otherwise (Byrne, 2006b; Katz, 2003, p. 897). Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) suggested that "white adults abdicate their responsibility to recognize and combat racism when they deny that race and racism can even exist in serious forms among young children" (p. 3), and a growing body of research supports their claim, showing that children, even very young children, *do* notice racial differences, *do* take actions that reflect racial bias, and *can* develop racial bias without ever receiving explicit instruction on its tenants or practices (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Katz, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Tatum, 1997; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

Working with a team of colleagues, researcher Phyllis Katz engaged in a longitudinal study examining children's understanding of race. She worked with 200 children and their families, 100 White and 100 Black, and evaluated each child nine times over a span of six years, beginning when the children were six months old and ending when they were six years old. (For details of the study's methodology and procedures and for a listing of its many related publications, see Katz, 2003.) As the age of six months, Katz used a habituation-dishabituation paradigm to measure the amount of time infants would look at images of same-race and different-race faces. When an infant looks longer at a face the action is not reflective of racial preference but is an indication that he or she is seeing something unfamiliar and that the brain needs more time to process and understand the image. The findings demonstrated that six-month-old infants could "both discriminate racial differences and exhibit categorization based on racial cues" (Katz, 2003, p. 898); they noticed race. At three years of age, Katz examined the children's peer preferences by asking parents about the racial identities of their children's friends and by asking the children to choose potential friends from a set of photographs. "86% of the White children made same-race choices, compared with only 32% of the Black children" (Katz, 2003, p. 905). At the ages of five and six years, the children were given a set of pictures with images of people on them. When asked to sort the pictures in

any way they chose, 68 percent of the children used racial markers to sort the cards, while 16 percent used gender, and 16 percent used other factors (such as age, clothing, or mood) (Katz, 2003, p. 905). Katz and her colleagues found that "by the age of six years, over half of the White children in their longitudinal study showed significant degrees of pro-White, anti-Black bias" (Katz, 2003, p. 897).

But Katz isn't the only researcher documenting children's racial awareness and biases. Educators, educational researchers, and families see evidence of children's race knowledge and biases regularly in classroom, school, and community settings, if they're open to seeing what is happening in front of them. For example, "Teachers and parents consider it an appropriate task for 2 [year old]s to learn color names: indeed, many consider it a sign of intelligence. Yet, it often comes as a big surprise when the same 2-year-old also notices the colors of people's skin" (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989, p. 22). As the following example demonstrates, interactions between children reflect their growing awareness of the social biases against darker skin tones:

> Two 4-year-old friends, one Black, one White, are chatting. Mike: "I'm going to get new pants." Doug: "What color?" Mike: "Blue." Doug: "What about brown?" Mike: "I don't like brown." Doug: "Oh, then you don't like me." Mike (looking surprised): "Yes, I do." At this point the teacher steps in: "There's something important I want to help the two of you figure out. Doug, why do you think Mike doesn't like you?" Doug: "I'm brown; he said he doesn't like brown." Teacher: "Mike, Doug thought when you said you didn't like brown you meant you didn't like his brown skin either. Is that how you feel?" Mike: "No, I don't like brown pants; I like brown Doug." Teacher: "Doug, is that okay?" Doug nods his head yes and the two go off together. (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989, p. 32)

As Doug and Mike's example demonstrates, young children recognize their own skin color and can talk about their own and others' racial characteristics (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 80-81), but young children can also demonstrate racial preferences reflective of racially biased social ideas (for example, patterns shown by children in all racial groups that disproportionately privilege choosing White dolls to play with, White people to befriend, and imagining themselves to be White if given the option to be anyone they wish) (Katz, 2003; for a review of past research, see Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 40 and Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001, p. 26-27). In addition, by the

preschool years, children's comments reveal a broad range of misinformation they have learned about race from the complex context in which they are embedded – their families, schools, communities, peers, media, and so forth (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Lewis, 2003; Ramsey, 1991; Tatum, 1997; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

In her 2006 study with about one hundred five to seven year old White children, researcher Birgitte Vittrup "could… see from her first test of the kids that they weren't color-blind at all. Asked how many white people are mean, these children commonly answered 'Almost none.' Asked how many blacks are mean, many answered 'Some' or 'A lot'" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 49). Working in the liberal city of Austin, Texas, the families enrolled in the study considered themselves on the whole to be multicultural and embracing of diversity. Even so, Vittrup's original surveys showed that "hardly any of these white parents had ever talked to their children directly about race" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 49). Parents assumed that their children would know their positive feelings about people of color. However, when Vittrup asked the children, "Do your parents like black people?" 14 percent said, "No, my parents don't like black people," and 38 percent replied, "I don't know."

Repeatedly, research showed reoccurring evidence that parent silence around issues of race and racism with young children perpetuated misconceptions about race that often lead to the children enacting racial biases reflective of White supremacy (Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Katz, 2003; Lewis, 2003). Whether grounded in a belief that children are color-blind, a concern that talking about race teaches racism, or other reasons, many parents, especially White parents, assume that if one doesn't teach or encourage blatant racism that children will not develop or engage racist attitudes or practices. Unfortunately, this assumption is hinged upon the faulty belief that we live in a race-neutral world where all people are treated equally unless bias intervenes. They forget that our world is not race neutral. Quite the opposite. We are embedded in a powerful and pervasive social system that is fundamentally biased towards White people and against people of color. Many White parents remain silent about race, believing that they are doing what is best for their child(ren), not knowing that research shows their silence to be conducive to the perpetuation of racism.

For example, as part of her longitudinal study, Katz and her colleagues evaluated variables from early in the lives of their participants that were significantly correlated

with race bias at six years of age. Many of the predictors seem quite logical. Children who displayed a high level of bias at the age of six were also likely to be children whose parents had negative views of diversity, who had limited heterogeneity in their environment, and/or who had more same-race friends than cross-race friends (Katz, 2003, p. 905-906). But being a child with a high level of bias was also more likely if parents didn't talk directly with their child(ren) about race and/or believed that this type of communication was unimportant. Katz (2003) explained, saying:

> Recall that there was considerable reluctance to talk about race in both Black and White families, although this was less often the case in Black families. Even when parents said it was an important thing to do, they often didn't.... Even though they were participating in a study about children's understanding of race, many White parents preferred to believe that talking about race would cause their children to see racial differences that they hadn't noticed before.... Whatever the reasons for it, parental silence does not seem to be a very good strategy, because those who were least biased at age six had parents who did talk about race. (p. 907)

Talking directly with children in age-appropriate ways that help them process their race-related observations and questions can help disrupt both confusion and misconceptions that lead to racial bias and discrimination (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989).

> [W]hen adults are silent, children's limited experiences and ability to make sense of what they see and feel may become the first step in developing prejudice or undermining their self-concept. Adult silence may also lead young children to conclude that the topic of racial identity is somehow dangerous. By providing language and information, we help prevent racism from harming children's evolving self-concept or influencing them to reject or fear others. (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010, p. 80)

Katz (2003) suggested that the only time parental silence is helpful is when parents are indeed racists (p. 907), because the research demonstrates that clear, open communication is the easiest way for children to adopt attitudes and perspectives that work to make sense of the world around them. The direct messages they receive – whether advocating racial bias or striving for racial equality – carry powerful weight.

In the absence of direct and explicit guidance on race-related matters, children seek answers on their own and construct meaning where they can find it.

[W]hite children are exposed to a wide range of attitudes about other groups as they grow up. They absorb concepts and feelings from their families, the community, and the media. Some views may be expressed directly; others may be masked. However, [embedded in a racist framework, as we are,] we can assume that children are continually hearing and seeing implicit and explicit messages that whites are superior and deserve their positions of power. How children interpret these messages and the impact they have on their lives varies. (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 104-105)

Contemplating the role parents play in this process of implicit messaging, Wise (2008) wrote:

As parents we often wonder if we're doing right by our kids, in lots of different areas. What we fail to realize is that many of the lessons we impart to our children don't come in the form of didactic, sit-'em-on-your-knee-and-give-'em-a-lecture moments. They come indirectly, almost imperceptibly. (p. 100)

Katz's research (2003) offered an example of this implicit, and sometimes unconscious, messaging:

When the children were 12 and 18 months of age, we asked either the mother or the father to go through a picture book with their child and to simply talk about the pictures. The book had no text but was composed of photographs taken from magazines that were systematically varied in age, race (Black and White), and gender. We recorded videotapes of the parents with their children and later coded what the parents said, which pictures they chose to talk about, and how long they spent on each one. The most striking thing about this task was that parents almost never mentioned race differences, which, given that the pictures were evenly divided by race, was quite surprising. Gender differences, on the other hand, were frequently mentioned. Even though parents didn't specifically mention race, however, they did tend to select same race people to talk about. Thus, they appeared to focus their children's attention on people that were physically similar to them (i.e., the in-group). (p. 904)

It was later found that this parental practice – of not mentioning race and of focusing more time and attention on photographs featuring same-race people – was a significant predictor of children who displayed a high level of racial bias at the age of six (Katz, 2003, p. 905-906).

Similarly, researchers Rebecca Bigler and Lynn Liben (2007) came to a similar conclusion when theorizing the causal factors of stereotyping and prejudice in early childhood. They wrote:

> The nonverbal behavior that adults direct toward members of social groups or show in response to the presence of group members (e.g., Whites becoming nervous or socially withdrawn in the presence of African Americans) is another source of implicit information likely to cause prejudice. Importantly, these nonverbal behaviors are likely to be unconscious and, as a consequence, adults are unlikely to explain their behaviors to children. We posit that children's attention to such correlations play a role in shaping the content of stereotypes and, in turn, prejudice. (p. 165)

Parents play a powerful role in shaping the race-related ideas and experiences to which their children are exposed.

> [I]t is not only the parents' direct attitudes that can influence children. Parents can influence their children through the type of communication they use or through the absence of communication, as well as through the way they structure their children's experience. It is parents, after all, who determine much about their children's world, including the neighborhoods they live in, the amount and type of television they view, the people who surround them, and also who their friends are—and all of these seem to matter [in shaping their race-based beliefs and practices]. (Katz, 2003, p. 907)

Combating the development of racist ideologies can and should take place on many fronts, but one direct way to support the disruption of racism is to change the way we talk about race with children. To be most effective conversations about race must be explicit and in terms that children can understand (Bronson & Merryman, 2009; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Katz, 2003). In addition, research suggests that anything less than intentionally anti-racist action acts in collusion with maintaining our already existing racist structures (Tatum, 1997).

> [M]any years of research document that young children are not 'color blind,' as so many white adults wish to believe. Rather, they begin to absorb the messages of white superiority and entitlement – the codes of racism – at an early age. Moreover, most white adults do not 'see' this process. Indeed, many live out their lives unaware of what is happening to their children and never question their own

racist views and racial and economic privilege. (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 50)

But change is possible. There is growing evidence that children have the capacity to consciously and critically participate in the world in age-appropriate ways that reflect a commitment to equity – if they are supported by caring adults in the development of anti-bias attitudes and the desire for equality (Derman-Sparks & the A.B.C. Task Force, 1989; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Tatum, 1997). With the intentional support of families, teachers, and community members, children can develop beliefs about race that resists the ideology of White supremacy that supports hierarchical division. Wise (2008) suggested that the greatest work parents can do is to model for their children the type of person they hope them to become and to live the racial ideology they hope their children will adopt. He wrote:

> The power of resistance, after all, is to set an example. It often won't change the person with whom you disagree, and even less often will it fundamentally bring about great social transformation. But it can almost always serve to empower the one who is watching, like children always do, waiting to see what we're really all about. And to not seek to offer that direction, to fail to resist injustice, for whatever reason – and among these we can count fear, cynicism, or just plain fatigue – is to ensure they will learn a very different lesson, with potentially disastrous consequences. As [James] Baldwin put it: "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them." (p. 102)

As such, examining messages young children are offered about race – especially children possessing numerous socially dominant identity markers – is vital for understanding the processes through which dominant racial ideologies and systems of social inequality are reproduced and potentially resisted.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding review, the primary conceptual assertions are that White individuals and families in the United States are embedded in a culturally dominant and historically produced social system deeply invested in the maintenance of racial inequality. Being born into a racial structure that privileges White people both personally and institutionally, Whites often fail to see the full scope of advantages afforded them and disparities endured by people of color. White supremacy, the dominant racial ideology in the United States, works to maintain and reproduce this unbalanced social structure through a variety of complimentary and interlocking beliefs and practices reflecting ideas of color-blindness, meritocracy, accountability evasion, and individualism. While each of these concepts is important for framing the study, they also serve as a vantage from which to analyze the study's data.

The empirical data suggests that the parenting of young children is one cultural site within which ideological social meanings can be produced, reproduced, and shared from one generation to the next (Maccoby, 2007; Rogoff et al., 2007), and yet there is little data on the parenting practices of White adults and their approach to parenting around issues of race and racism. The limited research available suggests that when addressing issues of race and racism, White families, even when appearing progressive, often act in collusion with existing, unequal hierarchies of racial power.

Considering the ways societal ideologies are expressed through the everyday practices of individuals, this study intends to examine the racial ideologies and practices of families possessing socially privileged identity markers and interrogate potential fault lines along which racial meanings and the current, unequal racial order are built, rebuilt, and contested.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Narrative inquiry draws upon the methodological assumption that people's narratives (their stories) are themselves the data needed to understand how people construct meaning in their lives (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Grounded in the recognition that "what people know and believe to be true about the world is constructed – or made up – as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings" (LeCompte & Schensul, in Schram, 2006, p. 44) and that the meaning we make of the world affects our actions within it, the utilization of in-depth participant interviews offers the opportunity to identify patterns of meaning-making across groups of participants while honoring the individuality of participants' stories and experiences (Seidman, 2006). Committed to the belief that both interviewers and interviewees are active participants in the co-construction of knowledge and that neither are repositories of static information to be mined, an intention within this study was to build spaces for open, participant-responsive dialogue (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The aim of this research project was to collect narrative-based qualitative data through a series of in-depth, individual interviews with a small group of participants, all of whom self-identified as White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers of young children (between the ages of three and eight years old), and who lived in a two-parent home with their children in the city limits of Chicago – an urban, Midwestern city. Over the course of two or three interviews, researcher-participant conversations explored the participants' attitudes and beliefs about parenting, their attitudes and beliefs around issues of race and racism in the United States, and potential relationships between those sets of beliefs and the participants' parenting practices. The intention was to "describe what the people in some particular place or status ordinarily do, and the meaning they ascribe to what they do, under ordinary or particular circumstances, presenting that description in a manner that draws attention to regularities that implicate a cultural process" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 68). Taking into account a complex mix of personal and institutional contexts, a critical analysis of interview data sought to document patterns and themes within and across parents' talk and to report the practices of parents embodying a similar social position and a comparable set of social privileges. Analysis also sought to consider the implications of those parenting patterns for the perpetuation or disruption of social inequality – particularly racism.

Of key importance to the methodological frame was a recognition that the perspectives shared by participants could not be understood as merely reflective of their racial identity.   Rather, their accounts were representations of a complex matrix of intersecting social privileges marked by their socially dominant statuses as White, middle-class, nuclear families, as well as being able-bodied, English-speaking, well-educated, U.S. born Christians. As a result, their accounts must be understood and analyzed with the understanding that their perspectives reflect not only racial privilege but the intersection and compounding of a myriad of social privileges.

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the beliefs and perspectives of a sample of White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers on issues of parenting and on issues of race. Giving careful attention and consideration to the implications of social location – particularly the embodiment of a socially privileged racial status – the study sought to document the ways White mothers made meaning of their own parenting intentions and practices. The study also sought to identify larger patterns of parental practices likely to perpetuate or disrupt the status quo of racial inequality and White supremacy in the United States.

A great deal of attention has been paid in social science research to the role of parents in the socialization processes of young children (for a review of the research, see Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 1992; Maccoby 2007), and yet research about the parenting beliefs and practices of families embodying an array of diverse social identities is prone to gaps. In the United States, research addressing the parenting attitudes and practices of people of color around issues of race and racism is plentiful, but we know remarkably little about the racial socialization beliefs and practices within White families (Hamm, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006), likely due to their embodiment of a socially dominant and culturally defining position of privilege (Anderson, 2003; McIntosh, 1995; Rothenberg, 2000; Wise, 2008). This study sought to begin the process of addressing this gap by intentionally identifying and naming parenting patterns within this population whose practices are often left unmarked (Byrne, 2006b; Frankenberg, 1993; Lewis, 2003; Lewis, 2004).

A series of interrelated research questions guided the study:

1) How do mothers who self-identify as White, middle-class, heterosexual, and urban-dwelling describe, both explicitly and implicitly, their perspectives and beliefs on parenting?

2) How do these same parents describe their parenting actions and practices in general?

3) How do they describe their perspectives and beliefs on issues of race and racism in the United States?

4) How do they understand and describe, both explicitly and implicitly, the relationship between their perspectives and beliefs about parenting and their perspectives and beliefs about race and racism?

5) How do they describe their parenting actions and practices specifically concerning issues of race and racism?

6) What relationships exist between these parents' beliefs and practices about parenting and race and larger discourses and/or ideologies in society that serve to perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality?

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

This study was designed to examine the experiences of those who inhabit the hegemonic norm in the United States. The study engaged White, middle-class, heterosexual, urban-dwelling residential parents living in two-parent homes where the children were similarly situated and the oldest child was between the ages of three and eight years old. Participants were asked to self-identify that these characteristics described their social situation, but they also needed to fall into the social hegemonic norm exemplifying these characteristics such that a stranger on the street would likely ascribe them with the same identity markers as they themselves profess. Intentionally excluding those who are likely to be denied social power or resources due to their skin color, socio-economic status, or sexuality allowed for the creation of a participant pool likely to represent common experiences among people living in a shared social position defined by multiple, socially-ascribed privileges and the social power tied to those positions.

In addition, participating parents needed to self-identify and be socially understood as women. Women employed full-time, part-time, as stay-at-home parents, or unemployed were welcome for inclusion, as were biological, adoptive, or foster parents, provided that their children were also White. The study sought the perspectives of mothers to the exclusion of fathers because of the small sample size and because of the continuing contention around possible differences between the parenting beliefs and practices of mothers and fathers (for a review of differing views see, for example, Silverstein, 1996). The choice to interview only women was meant to intentionally strengthen the sample set while leaving open the possibility to interview fathers in the future.

The decision to seek parents of young children was an intentional effort to isolate the research to a population of parents still relatively new to the practice of parenting and thus possibly more actively engaged in contemplating their parenting approach and intentions. In addition, parents whose children are still quite young are more likely to view themselves as the primary source of their children's socialization, versus parents of older children who often see themselves as having limited importance amidst the myriad of socialization sites affecting their children's development (Grusec & Davidov, 2007). Working with adults who view themselves as a primary source of socialization for their children was intended to simplify efforts to isolate children's beliefs and behaviors that parents attribute to their own influence rather than the influence of outside socializing

agents. Seeking urban parents was also a deliberate decision grounded in both convenience of access for the researcher and the suspicion that living within urban city limits might have a connection to issues of tolerance and diversity.

Focusing on such a specifically defined population helped prevent the confounding of data due to the inclusion of too many variables and allowed for increased clarity as to patterns of talk and practice specific to this population and context. Alongside equally important and equally needed population-specific studies addressing the experiences of populations outside the hegemonic norm, this study will contribute to a larger body of research that looks at parenting practices around issues of race and racism. In addition, critical research on White, multiply privileged families will help fill a sizeable academic gap by intentionally drawing attention to beliefs and practices often considered the "norm" but rarely interrogated for their role in the perpetuation or disruption of larger systems of power and privilege.

The women ultimately enrolled in the study were not selected at random, nor were their narratives intended to be a representative sample of the larger population. Rather, the women were invited to participate with the intentional purpose of seeking a range of experiences and ideas related to parenting and race. While all of the women shared a set of common characteristics, requesting their participation in the interviews was based in part on researcher perceptions that their lived experiences of Whiteness as well as their beliefs regarding issues of race and racism might differ.

DATA COLLECTION, PROCEDURES, AND ANALYSIS

In the process of this study, three Chicago mothers who self-identified as White, middle-class, heterosexual women were each engaged in a series of two or three open-ended, semi-structured interviews averaging between one and one-half hour to two hours in length per interview. While the women embodied a significant number of shared characteristics and traits, to the best of my knowledge they did not know one another and would be unlikely to meet. They lived in different Chicago neighborhoods, engaged in different personal activities and hobbies, come from very different backgrounds, engaged in differing fields of paid and unpaid work, and shared no site-specific affiliations (such as schools, faith-based organizations, or places of employment). (For details of their individual biographies and a brief discussion of the women's shared and divergent characteristics, see Appendix F: "Biographical sketches of research participants.")

At the onset of the study, potential participants were drawn from a pool of the researcher's personal acquaintances. Even so, potential participants did not include personal friends, peers, or colleagues, but rather individuals who shared with the principal investigator a tangential affiliation with a mutual local community, childcare, or educational site, or who were linked to the principal investigator through a shared personal friend. Initial interactions were purely introductory in nature with no expectation for immediate participation on the part of potential study participants. Potential participants were contacted in person, via telephone, or via e-mail (in that order of preference, with every effort being made to privilege person-to-person interactions) to introduce the principal investigator and the research study. For persons who expressed interest in learning more about the study and potentially participating, they were provided with either the "Recruitment Flyer" (see Appendix B) or the "Non-Exempt Studies with Adult Participants Consent to Participate in Research" form (see Appendix C), based on the extent and thoroughness of the initial conversation. After this initial conversation and any subsequent conversations such that a potential participant had been provided a complete introduction to the research and a copy of the "Non-Exempt Studies with Adult Participants Consent to Participate in Research" form (see Appendix A: "Oral Script Guidelines for Recruiting Participants" for a more delineated explanation of the framework for this series of conversations), potential participants were invited to examine the form and ask the principal investigator any questions they might have. At the conclusion of these introductory conversations, adults interested in participating in the study

were asked to exchange contact information with the primary investigator and together arrangements were made for the first research interview, seeking dates, times, and locations that best suited the desires and needs of the participants.

In the process of recruiting three study participants, a total of five women were approached. Early on two potential participants declined to enroll in the study, both based on feeling that they did not have enough time to commit to enrollment. One mother was nearing the due date of a second child and the second mother was dealing with severe health issues. Both women expressed apologies at their unavailability, but offered that they would have been happy to enroll under different circumstances in their personal lives.

Prior to the first interview with each Corinne, Katie, and Terra – the three women who agreed to enroll in the study – the principal investigator reviewed the details of the study to ascertain that the women understood its purposes, as well as the potential benefits and risks of involvement. The previously distributed consent forms were then utilized to reiterate for participants' their rights, including their rights to confidentiality, and to gain their assent for involvement in the study. Upon demonstrating their full understanding, participants were asked to sign their consent form, which the principal investigator collected.

To foster optimal data collection, the original intention was to conduct two interviews with each participant, each interview lasting approximately one to one and one-half hours in length, spaced roughly one week apart, and conducted in the participants' homes or in other mutually chosen locations suitable for conversation (Seidman, 2006). The details contextualizing each mother's series of interviews differed slightly from the goal and from one another, based on the woman's calendar availability and locational preferences. Corinne participated in two interviews roughly three weeks apart. Each interview was between two and one-half and three hours in length, and both were held on weekday afternoons in private rooms at the church Corinne attends regularly. Per her own request, Katie participated in two interview sessions held on the same day at her home. Each interview was between one and one-half and two hours in length, and the two sessions were separated by a 30-minute break. Terra participated in three interviews – each between one hour and one and one-half hours in length and all in a quiet corner of a local coffee shop. Her first two interviews were two weeks apart, and the third was held six weeks after the second. (Efforts were made to have the third

interview closer to the previous two, but unavailability an the parts of both the researcher and the participant and the participant's need to cancel a planned meeting prevented scheduling the dates any closer together.) Terra agreed to participate in three rather than two interviews because audio recording equipment failure resulted in only a portion of the second interview being recorded. The interviews for all participants took place within a span of roughly five months in 2010.

All of the interviews were based on a series of open-ended, semi-structured questions addressing the women's thoughts and practices concerning parenting and the implications of race and racism on their parenting. Interview questions included a number of questions that featured brief "preambles with supportive statements about behaviors that could be viewed as nonnormative," designed to improve the validity of parent self-reporting (Morsbach & Prinz, 2006, p. 15). In addition, questions that might have been considered taboo and questions with preambles created the opportunity for the interview framework itself to "generate counternarratives of whiteness which give respondents the opportunity to rethink the white scripts, those 'unquestioned assumptions' about race that are constantly being written, rewritten, and internalized" (Gallagher, 2000, p. 68). The first interview focused primarily on issues of identity, socialization, and parenting worldviews, and the second interview focused primarily on the intersections of race and parenting. Terra's third interview included a mixture of previous questions from the second interview and several follow-up questions to her previous responses. (See Appendix D: "Interview Question Guides" for a full list of guiding questions used during the interviews.) Interview questions were organized such that potentially taboo or pointed questions about racism and the role of race in parenting and in children's understandings of the world came embedded within the interview process, rather than right at the beginning. This strategic approach allowed for an informal establishment of the ways issues of race and racism were integrated into the everyday activities of the families, as well as the establishment of researcher-participant rapport, before asking more formally about those issues. Eventually asking more direct questions about race and racism supported the intention to honestly represent my interests as a researcher and allowed the mothers to vocalize their thinking around the issues directly.

At the conclusion of each mother's first interview, she was asked to complete a one-page questionnaire (see Appendix E: "'Parents' Perspectives on Parenting Practices and Race' Study Questionnaire") outlining basic demographic information concerning herself

and her family (including contact information, household makeup, race/ethnicity, perceived social class, household income, sexual orientation, educational attainment, and employment). The women were informed verbally and in writing that they needed only complete questions with which they felt comfortable. Data from the questionnaires allowed for an additional layer of triangulation with additional sources such as Census or research data on neighborhood and school demographics, as well as other facets of the families' community and social environments. The decision to administer the questionnaire after the first interview, rather than before, was an intentional effort to build rapport between participants and the primary investigator before asking participants to provide statistical, demographic information they might consider private or personal.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, along with researcher field notes and reflections (Seidman, 2006). Following each interview, participants were provided with a copy of the transcripts made from the audiotapes of their interview. The transcripts provided an opportunity for the researcher and the participants to revisit (formally or informally, based on the desires of the participants) key ideas and emergent themes in the narratives and allowed the researcher to confirm, and adjust as necessary, her understandings of participants' beliefs and intended meanings. This exchange allowed participants to voice their reflections on the conversations' content and to add any supplemental thoughts they deemed important. This low-level member-checking process encouraged the increased quality of the data and helped ensure the accurate representation of participants' perspectives in the research data and its interpretations.

Coding of the data included initial coding and focused coding through a process of reading and rereading the data and the identification and organization of themes, patterns, relationships, and contexts that existed between and among the texts (Bailey, 2007; Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Analysis drew upon scholarly readings and research to contextualize the data and conclusions, including implications of the study.

QUALITY CONCERNS

As a researcher committed to conducting data collection and data analysis that is of the highest quality and worthy of attention from a larger community of researchers, educators, and families, it is my responsibility to address the trustworthiness of my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The four factors that contribute to a qualitative study's trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to the capacity of a researcher to share data gathered from participants and the resulting conclusions in a way found to be credible and truthful. Transferability is the ability to apply knowledge gained from a research project beyond the scope of the study's limited frame. Dependability is the degree to which data and its interpretations are found to be consistent and repeatable. And confirmability is the measure to which research interpretations and conclusions are grounded in raw data and not researcher biases or interests. In this study, efforts seeking trustworthiness were supported by a number of strategies.

In addressing credibility, third strategies were employed. First, the utilization of several data sources rather than just one – including transcripts of participant interviews, participants' responses to a written questionnaire, and researcher field notes and reflections – allowed for the collection of a richer and more layered data set and for improved understanding of the material. Multiple interviews with the same participant allowed data to be compared for consistency and/or evolution over a span of several conversations days, weeks, or months apart, and comparing data across several participants speaking to the same topic allowed for the emergence of patterns and discrepancies in themes. Second, at regular intervals throughout the research process, the feedback of peer debriefers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was enlisted. Drawing from experience and expertise in the fields of education, family studies, clinical/community psychology, cultural anthropology, and social justice, these unaffiliated colleagues made pointed observations, posed both content and approach-related questions, interrogated researcher biases and assumptions, and served as a sounding board for both researcher reflection and the testing and defense of emergent analytical themes. Their "outside eyes" helped solidify and make explicit key analytical threads. Third, the process of member checking was engaged to a limited degree and in a primarily informal way. At intervals during the interviews themselves, the researcher verbally summarized the participants' responses using phrases including "If I understand correctly…" and "By that

you mean…" to help establish and solidify the participants' intended meanings. In addition, during the interview process the researcher (and/or the participants') regularly referred back to previous conversations, opening the opportunity to correct previous statements or to volunteer additional information. Participants were also given digital copies of the transcripts created from the conversations in which they had been a part. They were issued open invitations to read the transcripts at their leisure and engage the researcher in additional conversation as desired. (Two of the three participants referenced the study and their reflections upon it in post-study, participant-initiated conversations with the researcher.)

This study makes no claim that the experiences and perspectives of the participating mothers represent the experiences and perspectives of all mothers – nor even all White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers. But, the larger cultural and ideological perspectives that the women engage and their parental struggles seem to have relevance for others, including those with differing identity markers. To address the potential for this research's transferability to contexts beyond the participants in this setting, I have made every effort to provide highly contextualized and thorough descriptions of the setting, the research process, and the raw narrative data with hopes that readers will have all the details necessary to extrapolate research findings with potential transferability to other situations or circumstances.

The elements of dependability and confirmability can be ascertained by readers with the support of information included in this paper. I have attempted to describe with intentional transparency the process of my work and have provided the tools necessary to repeat the work if so desired. Within the study itself, readers can draw their own conclusions across the range of raw data, comparing findings across participants but also in the context of past, similar literature in the field. In addition, the existence of my complete collection of raw data, notes, reflections, and implementation and analytical tools are available upon request for an external audit trail to access and confirm the consistency of my work and the degree to which a similar study could be mounted based on the replication of theoretical foundations and methodological structures utilized in this study.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

In efforts to conduct research with the highest possible level of ethical openness and transparency, a number of considerations were implemented during the course of the study. Key areas of attention included informed consent, participant protection and confidentiality, participant/researcher power dynamics, and reciprocity.

In addition to the measures described in the "Participant selection" and "Data collection, procedures, and analysis" sections, participants were verbally informed about the intended purposes of the research study and their role and rights as participants. During all stages of the study – from inception to reporting – efforts were made to protect the identities of all involved individuals. All written materials, including transcriptions, researcher notes, analytical tools, and findings, have utilized pseudonyms and the selective inclusion of personal characteristics and geographic markers to protect participants' anonymity. In addition, all tangible and digital records and data related to this study have been stored securely in locations (physical and digital) to which only the researcher has access. All of these issues, and others related to conducting ethical research with human subjects, were vetted and approved by both the Local Review Board and the Institutional Review Board of DePaul University.

In addressing issues of researcher and participant power, attempts were made to limit participants' potential desire to instill the roles of researcher and participant with any unnecessary power differentials. While researchers have only a limited ability to influence others' perceptions of them or their role, several strategies were implemented to encourage a shared power dynamic between the researcher and the participants in this study. First, by selecting families with whom I had limited or no prior contact and with whom I had little or no inherent authority, I attempted to minimize participant reactivity by creating a role for myself that neither interfered nor infringed upon the family's day-to-day interactions before, during, or after the research process. Second, by basing my research on conversations with the mothers directly and not on family observations or conversations with both parents, I hoped to encourage the women's trust in my authentic interest in *their* perspectives on parenting and discourage any belief that I intended to judge their physical ability or proficiency to parent. (For a further discussion of my social positioning in relation to the participants, please see the upcoming section "Author's positionality.") Third, I attempted to create an open environment – physically, atmospherically, and communicatively – in which the mothers felt comfortable speaking

freely about their experiences and opinions without judgment – positive or negative – from me.

In recognition of their gracious sharing of time and thoughts, participants were given digital copies of the transcripts made from conversations in which they had taken part. Participants were offered the option of receiving a hard copy of their transcripts in addition or instead of the digital format, but none expressed a preference for a hard copy, nor an explicit desire to have one supplied to them.

In addition to dilemmas of theoretical framing and transparency, as a researcher this work has involved a continuing personal and ethical struggle. Long before I began collecting the data that would become this study, I had apprehensions about engaging in this work. As a White researcher socially positioned similarly to the participants, I knew that I was likely to be perceived as a racial insider. I knew two other things as well. First, that "many whites are comfortable expressing their racism to white strangers because they belief their skin color makes them kindred spirits in racism, or at least sympathetic to the 'white experience'" (Gallager, 2000, p. 72), and second, that "[o]ne's whiteness becomes a form of methodological capital researchers can use to question whites about the meaning they attach to their race" (Gallagher, 2000, p. 72). Being perceived as a racial insider but interrogating Whiteness as an ideological outsider (or resister) creates an ethical dilemma. While I believe in the larger importance of the study and its efforts, I am also violating what Patricia Hill Collins (2000a) calls "race loyalty" or "race solidarity" in that I am knowledgeably using the accounts of those who identify as White, just as I do, to delineate patterns of intentional and unintentional racism among Whites engaged in the very personal and hallowed process of parenting. I am consciously "taking sides against the self" (Collins, 2000a, p. 124) and I carry guilt for engaging women in the study, knowing that I would likely be using their accounts to show larger patterns of discrimination, oppression, and injustice within our society and the ways it can be perpetuated through White, middle-class parenting. The women agreed to participate in the study out of kindness, graciousness, and some level of interest. The findings could conflict significantly with their understandings of self. And while the intention of the work was never to isolate or label the women negatively, they may take affront to the analysis applied to their parenting attitudes and practices.

I believe that the participants in this study, and others like them, are doing everything in their power to be good parents and I in no way want to diminish the

intention and the importance of their efforts. While I still feel some trepidation about the possible sense of betrayal that reading the study in its entirety might cause individual participants, and general readers alike, I also hold steadfastly to a quotation from Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997), which says "the role of the ally is not to help the victims of racism, but to speak up against systems of oppression and to challenge other Whites to do the same" (p. 109). If I am to fulfill the obligations I have made to myself to do meaningful justice work, I must be willing to face the reality that my criticisms and suggestions may not be welcomed. That does not mean, however, that they do not have a place of importance.

This study is grounded in a conviction that societal ideas are manifested by individuals and that individuals contribute to societal ideas. Humans are socially-embedded creatures, and throughout the study I strove to remain ever-cognizant of that duality. The findings are not really about the individual mothers who participated, but about the ways that they manifested and engaged larger cultural ideas. The intention of this study was not to determine whether or not Corinne, Katie, and Terra as individuals were racist, as that – to me – seemed fruitless. Rather, the study was intended to recognize that the participants' accounts are representative of the narratives of many others – particularly those who see themselves as White, middle-class, good-intentioned progressive liberals. If we accept that all people are capable of engaging in racist practice but also have the capacity to grow, change, and strive to exemplify increasingly fewer racist attitudes and practices, we are freed to shed the disabling labels of "racist" and "not racist." In addition, we are able to focus more intently on actively seeking and enacting beliefs and actions that are increasingly less engaged in the perpetuation of racism and increasingly more engaged in the disruption of racism. The narratives in this research represent the experiences and stories of three specific women. Each story is uniquely distinct from the other stories in the study and from the stories of other people in the world. And yet, through these three women's accounts we have the opportunity to recognize larger meta-stories that resonate with the experiences of many. And the lessons we learn from their narratives may have applications for the broader populace. The intention of this study has always been to employ the women's stories in the service of deepening our own understanding of how racism is at work in the parenting practices of White, middle-class families. I am grateful for the generosity with which the women shared their stories, including (and perhaps especially) the parts that make us – me, them,

and readers – ashamed or that demand that we question our own beliefs. If we can approach the women's stories with humility and a willful openness to turn a questioning eye on our own experiences, then we can enter into the challenging pursuit of honest growth with understanding and compassion, rather than with condemnation or contempt.

AUTHOR'S POSITIONALITY

The analysis of data produced in this study must be understood with attention to author positionality because my identity has implications for how I was perceived by participants and how I understood the study and its data. As a researcher, I share many of the participants' social identity markers and categories of unearned social privilege. Overall, I believe that our similarities worked to my benefit by establishing my "in-group" status and supporting the establishment of a sense of community, like-mindedness, and trust between each of the participants and myself. Corinne and Katie agreed to participate in the study after several face-to-face conversations with me, such that they were likely to have been aware of various identity labels by which I could be described, including my gender, race, class, age, education, geography, and language use. Terra agreed to participate in the study without having met me, but in our initial telephone and email conversations, I described myself and my background in enough detail that she was likely able to paint a fairly accurate depiction of my socially labeled identity.

The most significant differences between the participants and I were age, marital status, and parenting status. Each of the women was between eight and thirteen years my elder, had been married for a minimum of five years, and had one or two child, while I am unmarried and have no children. I believe these differences served primarily as a benefit to the study because I was able to present myself as a relatively "blank slate" and ask naïve questions that perhaps would have seemed silly to participants if I had children of my own. Recognizing that parenting is a complex topic of which no one person can fully understand another's experience, but of which we can all be supportive, I attempted to approach the women's narratives with humility, hoping to gain understanding of what each choose to share while also maintaining space for critical reflection. While I am surely unable to fully understand the depth of each woman's experiences as a mother and as an individual, I believe that I was able to use their stories to better understand how each participates in the world.

Also of note is a recognition that our shared social markers may have contributed to participant assumptions about my beliefs and values, particularly in relation to issues of race and racism. Some of their assumptions were accurate, others extremely inaccurate. While incorrect assumptions on the part of participants occasionally caused me some confusion or discomfort during the interviews, I do not believe they affected the overall quality of the data. Serving in the role of a researcher, however, did require a shift in my

behavior away from my typical inclination to clarify my own position and engage individuals in conversation about topics on which we disagree. A number of times in the interviews, participants voiced perspectives that I do not share. Rather than offer my personal thoughts and perhaps discourage the women's willingness to continue speaking freely, I instead focused more consciously on listening without judgment, seeking to honor and respect the women's willingness to share their thoughts, and proposing "Devil's Advocate" questions as appropriate to help establish and clarify the women's positions in a non-confrontational way.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study's data set is limited in four ways: 1) the limited number of participants and the limited diversity in their social identities, 2) data collection methods that allowed for flexibility of conversation rather than the increased consistency that comes with rigidity, 3) the failure to supplement narrative data with observational data, and 4) the data's reflection of a specific moment in time rather than a longitudinal perspective.

Focusing on an examination of accounts from three specific women marked by a number of shared social markers, a shared geographical context, and narratives from a specific moment in time, the study does not take into account the ways that an expanded data set might alter the findings. Even so, noting the social, geographic, and temporal setting of the data is important for understanding the contextual frame of conclusions drawn from the study. Despite these limitations, exploring the narratives of three White, middle-class, urban mothers in the Midwest can be valuable for understanding larger cultural ideologies about race and parenting at work in the United States. Through the careful preservation of parents' perspectives and beliefs as articulated in direct quotations excerpted from larger in-depth interviews, readers can make informed decisions about the transferability of this data to larger social stories. The study outlines patterns in White, middle-class parenting that are reflections of and contributors to larger cultural discourses about race and the pursuit of equality. In addition, the challenges these three women face in enacting parenting practices more likely to disrupt systems of White supremacy and parent in ways supportive of racial equality may resonant with or be of interest to other parents, educators, or community stakeholders in understanding and resisting larger patterns of systemic racial injustice and its cycle of perpetuation.

The study is also fundamentally limited by the methods used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews support a more conversational tone in which participants and researchers can follow threads of conversation as seems natural. Such an approach allows for unplanned follow-up questions and the pursuit of interesting, relevant threads of thought, while still maintaining a degree of consistency across all interviews. More structured interviews would have likely resulted in a more tightly controlled and consistent set of data from each participant, but would have restricted the possibility of probing participant narratives for greater clarity, depth, and comprehension.

In addition, the intentional focus on participant narratives allowed for an analytically intense emphasis on the meaning participants made of their own experiences.

But the analysis was limited, in some ways, to the participants' perspectives and the ways they constructed knowledge from their experiences. Due to the focus on the process of meaning making, attention to narratives without observational support was appropriate, but observational data of parenting in action would likely shift and deepen the overarching understanding ultimately made concerning parenting around race and racism.

The data within this study reflected participant perspectives, attitudes, and orientations during a specific moment in time. The resulting narratives are thus bound by that temporal reality. They are windows into specific moments within the lives of three parents. They do not allow for a long-term analysis of parental attitudes or actions, nor take into account the possibility of change over time. They are relevant for depicting larger discourses and ideologies at work in White, middle-class parenting, but do not document the process of individual growth or change over time.

FINDINGS

Parenting is no easy task. It is an essential part of the human story and has had a presence in the human experience for as far back as the human experience has existed. And yet, there is no blueprint. No "How To" manual. No "If you do X, Y, and Z, your kid will turn out A, B, and C." And whether one's parenting goals focus (by choice or context) on helping a child reach her fifth birthday or on molding a moral, caring citizen (or both), most parents are united by a common desire to do what they understand to be best for their child(ren). And at the center of their parenting choices is that well-intentioned aim. Yet, even with that clear directive, you would be hard-pressed to find a parent who describes parenthood as "easy."

I once met a woman who recalled the joy of delivering her daughter but joked that immediately thereafter felt as if she were a special agent on an extremely important mission – that of parenting – and the message was clear: "From here on out you will receive no further instructions." Similarly, I remember when I was going through a particularly difficult time as an adolescent and my grandmother tried to console my worried mother saying, "Parenting is both the most challenging and most rewarding job you will ever have." Whether my mother drew comfort from that statement, I don't know, but my grandmother's words continue to ring true in my experiences talking with other mothers. Parenting is hard. It is filled with struggle and worry and heartbreak. But, for the women I have known, it is equally imbued with profound joy and boundless love. In their parenting, women want to do what is best for their children. And navigating the complexity of what that really means is at the heart of this study.

What does it mean to do what is best for our children, particularly when it comes to parenting around issues of race and racism? And what beliefs or goals guide our understanding of best parenting practices?

PERSPECTIVES AND BELIEFS ON PARENTING

In their parenting, Corinne, Katie, and Terra shared a common context as mothers who self-identified as White, middle-class, heterosexual women living with their families within the city limits of Chicago.[7]   And as they discussed their general perspectives and beliefs about parenting, topics of common interest and attention arose. Each described what she understood as the source of her parenting knowledge – revealing interesting, and sometimes differing, ideas about the role of instinct in the acquisition of parenting knowledge and in the making of parental decisions. The women also discussed their views on whether parenting "instinct" is biologically imprinted, culturally created, a combination of both, or something else entirely. Each of the women also shared ideas about character traits she hoped her child(ren) would grow to embody, what and/or who she wanted included in her child(ren)'s social contexts, and how she hoped her child(ren) would engage with others. By asking the questions "Who do I want my child to be?", "Who do I want my child to be around?", and "How do I want my child to interact with others?", mothers addressed their ideas about the internal identity landscapes of their children, the external contexts of their children, and the meeting of the two. In addition, all three women discussed their beliefs about how children learn and how they come to understand and engage in the world – a set of knowledge the women used to inform the implementation of their parenting goals.

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[7] For more detailed information on the participants' individual backgrounds and contexts and for a brief discussion of the women's shared and divergent identity markers, see Appendix F: "Biographical sketches of research participants."

Knowing what to do – Parenting instincts: Where do they come from, and do you trust them?

In the process of parenting, adults are continuously in the act of making decisions. How and when do I discipline my child? How and when do I answer the questions my child is asking? What boundaries should I set for my child, and when? How do I balance the needs of everyone in my family? And, what are we going to have for dinner?

In their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra agreed that much of what they originally knew about parenting – their parenting instincts – had come from the models provided in their own childhoods by the ways they themselves had been parented. They discussed feelings of either trust or wariness concerning those parenting practices, and for those who questioned whether their childhood experiences had facilitated their development into the type of person they wanted their own children to become or had created barriers to that development, the mothers also discussed their experiences seeking alternative parenting models and alternative sets of parenting knowledge. Regardless, all of the women were united by a common commitment to engage parenting practices they described as "feeling right."

Making decisions as a parent is a process that looks different from parent to parent and from situation to situation. When describing their own parenting practices, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all addressed the role instinct had played in their efforts to make good parenting decisions. All three of the women had a sense of what "feels good," "feels right," or resonated with them when it came to their parenting strategies or philosophies, and they relied on that positive association to help guide their parenting practices. All three were unwilling to undertake parenting approaches that didn't "feel right." The women's experiences diverged, however, in the extent to which each trusted her parental instincts and in whether or not she intentionally questioned those instincts' content or origins. Women who felt overall comfort in the ways they themselves had been parented, both practically and contextually, tended to accept their parenting instincts with little or no question and chose to parent similarly to the ways they themselves had been parented. Women who expressed some level of discontent with their own experiences of being parented – whether in a context they hoped not to replicate for their own child(ren) or a distrust of parenting belief systems or practices that had caused emotional or ideological conflict as they grew – were more likely to question their parenting instincts and seek outside guidance in framing their own parenting beliefs and practices.

When describing their experiences becoming parents and contemplating what being a good parent meant to them, all of the women reflected on the ways that they themselves had been parented and whether or not that was a model they wanted to emulate. Katie was unique in explicitly wanting to imitate many of her own parents' parenting choices. She said[8], "[M]y parents did such a *great* job raising me and my brothers." And the parenting example they provided guided her current parenting in many ways. She said, "I think that just whatever I have learned is how I parent." In addition, she described a sense of comfort with the role of motherhood, saying, "I just kind of feel like I have an inner natural nature of being a mom." For her, there was an innate aspect of parenting that she trusted; it felt "right."

For Terra and Corinne, feeling confident in their parenting choices did not come as easily. Neither was comfortable modeling their own parenting practices after the ways they themselves had been parented. To do so didn't resonate positively with them. Terra said, "I think I'm a better parent because of the way I was actually raised. Because I don't think it was the best way to be raised. So I want to be sure that I don't do that [with my own child]." For her, the parenting model with which she grew up offered guideposts of what to avoid in the parenting of her own child.

Corinne, too, used her parents' example for the lessons it offered her on what *not* to do as a parent. When describing her parenting choices early on, she said:

> I knew that... I was choosing things that my mother had not chosen. And, it's funny how parenting can be a continued rebellion. And how my mother definitely took it that way. She felt as though I was making choices that were very different from the choices that she made and "What was wrong with the way that I had turned out that I wanted to make all of these very different choices?"... [In her parenting,] she took a very authoritarian route. And I wanted to be authoritative without being authoritarian. And it's hard because the only thing that you know of parenting is how you were parented and it comes out, regardless. And so I still

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[8] A note about participant quotations: To support reader clarity and ease of flow, fillers and minor speech disfluencies (including "um," "like," "you know," "I mean," and natural stutters and repetitions) have been removed, except when preserving the disfluency is representative of an important fumbling for words, confusion, or internal conflict or is necessary for maintaining the meaning, context, or atmosphere of the quotation. Participants' grammatical and syntax errors have also been left intact. All emphasis within quotations is original (unless noted otherwise), and long pauses, laughter, or important participant movements have been noted in brackets within the quotations.

hear my mother's voice coming popping right out of my mouth a lot more than I would like.

For Corinne, the way a person is themselves parented is what they intrinsically "know" about parenting; it becomes their default set of parenting practices. When she wasn't intentionally working to redefine for herself what parenting looked like and enact that new understanding, she fell into patterns set up for her by the example of her own childhood, even when those were patterns she consciously sought to avoid.

When Terra and Corinne made the intentional choice to parent differently than they themselves had been parented, both felt that they needed knowledge they did not already have. They didn't trust the parenting knowledge they had received through the example of their own lives. And in both cases, they turned to published resources, including books and academic research, as a place to seek parenting models that more closely resonated with their developing vision of parenting. Terra said:

> I'm an avid reader.... So, I'm like, "Okay, if I want to learn to do something, I read a book on it," right?! So if I want to learn about psychology, I'll read a psychology book. If I want to learn about finance, I'll read a finance book. If I want to learn about being a parent, I'm gonna read a parent book. Well, "Hello!", there are 50 million parenting books out there. And I found myself grabbing a bunch [and] trying to read all these books and nothing worked for me.... But I did come across this [one] book... and I think that book and me are probably the most similar. It felt really right.

So, while the parenting strategies Terra felt most comfortable embracing didn't come directly from her own childhood experience, when she found them, she knew it. They resonated with her, even as she sifted through many other approaches that did not.

In her interviews, Corinne often talked about the impact research had made on her parenting practices. Like Terra, she sought resources that resonated with her feelings about being a parent. But she also talked about the ways she was always learning new things, learning to see her parenting in new ways, and learning to rethink things that at one point had felt "right" but as she gained more knowledge no longer did. For Corinne, research was a trusted source of parenting knowledge, and she intentionally questioned aspects of her own parenting instinct – her automatic responses – turning instead to research for guidance. When talking with her own mother about parenting and the influence research has had on Corinne's parenting decisions, Corinne said:

My mother criticizes me for that a lot. She's just like, "You are letting the experts parent your children. And you are not just doing it from instinct." And I was like, "Is it instinct? Is it instinct that you parent from?! Or is it socialization from your own parents that you parent from?" Because you can automatically do things, but because you automatically do things, is it the right thing to do?!

Corinne blatantly questioned many of the parenting practices that others might call instinctual, marking them instead as socially constructed and having gained credibility through oral tradition, family history, and societal context rather than any sort of scientifically-based research. And rather than trust that instinct, Corinne sought to question it – implementing practices that stood up to scientific investigation and dismissing those which did not. Believing, like Katie, that what you know of parenting comes from the ways you were parented, Corinne was unwilling to rely on the examples with which she grew up. Like Terra, when Corinne reflected as an adult on her own childhood, she had a strong awareness of the ways that her parents' parenting practices hadn't served what she saw as her best interests in the long-term. And as an adult, she had made a commitment not to reproduce that disservice in her own parenting. Thus, rather than replicate parenting practices that had been passed down to her, Corinne looked to scientific research for information to help guide her parenting practices on topics ranging from feeding and sleeping to issues of discipline and social/emotional development and interaction. Because she didn't unequivocally trust the parenting knowledge she inherited, she sought to implement parenting strategies supported by scientific study that observed, measured, and analyzed outcomes over time. Like the other mothers, she wanted what was best for her children and she relied on feeling a sense of "rightness" or resonance with the parenting strategies she employed. But, unlike Katie, she and Terra intentionally resisted replicating the parenting practices they experienced as children and used research and academic resources to support their adoption of alternative parenting strategies.

Building character – Who do you want your child to be?

The parenting practices adults consciously employ are based, in part, upon the anticipated outcomes they hope to achieve through those practices. An adult's parenting goals help determine the parenting practices and actions they enact in efforts to realize those goals. As parents answer the questions "Who do I want my child(ren) to be?" and "What hopes do I have for my child(ren)?" they begin to frame a set of parenting goals, which then play a key role in the process of determining parenting practices.

In conversations with Corinne, Katie, and Terra, all three mothers identified character traits they valued highly and hoped their own children would grow to embody. Desired qualities common among all three women's narratives included the hopes that their children have respect for themselves and others, that their children have an appreciation for their own context and material wealth, and that their children have a commitment to diligence and hard work. In addition, all three expressed the hope that their children do not develop a sense of entitlement, particularly to material things. Even so, the ways in which the women talked about these values and explained their importance and relevance differed from narrative to narrative. Some valued specific traits because of the benefits their attainment offered to the individual. Other women valued the same traits but because of the potential benefits those traits offered for both the self and the larger community.

Each woman's stories seemed to fall along a continuum in which the narratives at one extreme expressed an individualistically-oriented outlook where the perceived value or benefit of specific character traits were explained in terms of how they benefited one's self. And at the other end of the spectrum were narratives framed from a more communally- or relationally-minded perspective, such that the embodiment of specific character traits were explained as desirable because of the resulting benefits to the larger society or community, rather than to one's self alone. While all three women used language reflective of both individualistically-minded and communally-minded perspectives at some point within their talk, cumulatively each settled into a specific spot along the continuum that distinguished them from the other women.

Katie

Katie, for example, tended to explain the character traits she hoped for her children based on ideas of personal well-being and what traits a "good person" should

exhibit. This did not mean that her parenting goals did not in some way take into account the effects her children's expression of specific character traits had on others; merely that she did not explicitly mention or address ideas of communal repercussions, only personal ramifications. For instance, Katie talked at length about a concern that her children were in jeopardy of not developing a sense of appreciation for their material well-being. As such, one of her hopes was that her parenting actions would help her children develop appreciation for the quality of life they enjoy. But the language she utilized marked a sense of appreciation as *personally* valuable and made no mention of the potential value (or lack) having a sense of appreciation could have for the greater community or for understanding one's self in the context of that larger society. She said:

> [I want my children to value and have] appreciation, respect, diligence and hard work, and love and confidence.... I just don't want [my kids] to be spoiled and I'm a little worried that I have another half to [deal with] – because of [my husband] Markus; when he doesn't see them that much, he overbuys.

Katie then offered several examples, noting that if the family goes to the movie theatre, her husband might buy each of their children several boxes of candy and popcorn and soda. If the family is in a large store, the children prefer to stay with their father, who will buy them multiple toys, videos, or other gifts, whereas their mother will not. Similarly, Katie recalled a time when the family was at the airport traveling and Markus wanted to treat the children to donuts. Rather than purchase four – one for each member of the family – he bought a full dozen. Katie said:

> [I]t's kind of overexposure or overindulgent, or something.... So that's just material, but it's a way of, like, they're learning that they can just have anything anytime. That's what we have to work on. So that's why appreciation probably was the first thing that came out [when I listed traits I want to see in my children] because I just hope that they *do* learn to work hard and appreciate and all that.

She went on to say, "I really hope to ground them and help them appreciate, as opposed to expecting or being entitled [to something].... I hope that the word 'spoiled' is never used."

Katie was legitimately concerned that her children were in danger of developing, or solidifying, a sense of material entitlement without developing an understanding of the financial value of hard work. And one of the barriers she identified when facing this challenge was her spouse, who seemed to equate the purchasing of consumer goods for

his children with an expression of love. But the *reason* Katie described a sense of entitlement as undesirable was the connection she made between an expression of entitlement and the ascription of being spoiled. Katie was worried that if her children were not appreciative, others would assume them to be self-centered, over-indulgent, expectant of excessive material gifts, and so on. And she did not want her children to be seen or understood in that way; she felt that possessing a sense of entitlement was not a personally advantageous trait and was not a trait that would be exemplified by a "good person."

Terra

Terra described a very similar dilemma in her own parenting, but some of the reasons she stated as to *why* she would like to avoid her child developing a sense of material entitlement differed from those stated by Katie. In describing her situation, Terra said:

> [M]y mom will go into, like, CVS and buy [Aralyn] something every time she goes. And we have these big conversations about why that's bad and I don't want her to do that. [I tell my mom,] "Then you're reinforcing the fact that every time she goes to the store she gets something."

She went on to say:

> [I]t's just the concept of, it doesn't matter if it costs a penny or a dollar or ten cents, if you're going to the drug store and you buy your kid something every time, you're just reinforcing that they get anything that they want all the time. I don't want her to be – I don't want her to have that kind of – I don't know. [Terra laughed.] I don't like that…. I don't want her to think that money's endless cuz it's not.

When asked directly about the personal traits or qualities she wanted her daughter to embody, Terra replied:

> [To] be thankful for what she has, to be thankful to other people, to work hard, to be aware that she's not the center of the universe, that there's other things that are going on and other people's problems that are bigger…. To be a compassionate person…. To be a good person. And good to others. I think that's the kind of qualities I'd want for her.

She also said:

I want her to realize that not everybody's the same, not everybody has what she has – and we've got to help others, we have to be kind to others, be thankful for what we have. So I really hope that's what she learns from me. And if she can get away with that, I think she'll be okay.

In the lives of their families, Terra and Katie expressed the same parenting concern – that their children don't develop and act upon a sense of entitlement. And both named a similar barrier – an alternate caregiver whose parenting actions contradicted the mother's intended goal. However, the ways in which Katie and Terra expressed their reasons for seeking to avoid material entitlement differed in important ways. Katie sought to avoid entitlement because she wanted her children to understand the connection between hard work and money and she didn't want her children labeled as spoiled. Terra, too, sought to establish a correlation between hard work and money, but she also used language that specifically described materialism, the avoidance of entitlement, and an appreciation for what one does have *in relationship to specifically named others*. In her parenting Terra endeavored to contextualize the sense of appreciation she hoped her daughter would develop by encouraging Aralyn to see herself in relationship with other people, rather than as a person with no contextual comparison. This added step of avoiding entitlement specifically because of the way it hinders a person's understanding of self as belonging to a larger, contextual community is absent from Katie's narrative.[9]

Corinne

Corinne, too, described the character traits she held in esteem as predominantly relationally-oriented, rather than individualistically-directed. In naming traits she hoped her children would grow to possess, she said:

I hope they learn respect for other people. I hope that they learn to express their feelings and to know what their feelings are…. I hope that they don't grow up with a sense of entitlement…. I hope that they have empathy. And I hope that they just enjoy life. And I hope that they are grateful. Just in a general sense. Not to me. But just [pause], to know, to be in gratitude for the things that they have in their lives.

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[9] It is worth noting that neither Katie nor Terra mentioned the reality that hard work is not always, nor consistently, rewarded equitably or with financial consistency among all people in all contexts.

When speaking directly about entitlement, she gave a recent example.

> I told [my son] Garrett the other day, that, you know, I said, "Sweetie... I have got so many things to do. And it is important. Things that I need to work on for the family. Things I need to work on for myself. And things I need to work on that I think are important for, you know, our community. And I can't do every single thing that you are asking me to do. Um, because it doesn't all revolve around you. We have to think about where we are in relation to other people." And then, the next day he came upstairs and he had peanut butter, like, dripping down his arm, and he had cut up... this banana. He'd made this banana sandwich and he said, "I made my own lunch because you are *not* my servant!" And I said, "That's great, sweetie!" It was a mess, but... But he heard — ... [T]he whole idea of not having a sense of entitlement, I think, explodes the way you think about the world and can open it up more. So I think that that's why it's an important thing. Because if you feel entitled, then you're in a very specific and shut-off way of thinking and it keeps you from, either, *doing* things or *being* things. And I think it's just about stripping away privilege, which I think people are *afraid* of when you talk about it. But it's about opening more doors into, you know, amazing new experiences of things.

For Corinne, then, having a sense of entitlement was undesirable because it directly interfered with one's capacity to reach their own potential and it directly interfered with one's capacity to engage meaningfully with others. Like Terra, Corinne answered the question "Who do I want my child to be?" by answering as if she had been asked a slightly different question — "Who do I want my child to be *in relation to others*?" When relationally-oriented, a priority is placed on seeing oneself in the context of others to whom you have an obligation to act in a way that, when possible, benefits the larger community rather than benefiting merely one's self.

Thus, while all three women expressed a similar hope — the desire to impress upon their children the importance of hard work and a resistance to developing a sense of entitlement — the underlying ideological reasons for the value differed between the women based on the explicitness (or lack) with which each described the importance of that trait in the context of relationships with others.

Desiring diversity – With whom or what do you want your child to engage?

In the process of parenting, adults are acutely aware that context matters. One's environment plays a role – physically, geographically, and socially – in shaping one's day-to-day lived experiences. One's environment cannot always be controlled, but when possible, parents often make choices about the environments in which they raise their children and seek to maintain a context that supports the fostering of desirable experiences, relationships, traits, and values.

In their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all spoke of the positive value they placed upon raising their children within an experientially and socially diverse, rather than homogenous, environment. In her own ways, each expressed a desire that her child(ren) be exposed to diversity – both a diverse range of opportunities and experiences (like involvement in sports or music) and a diverse range of people and life contexts. But, as before, the rationale each shared for *why* she saw these experiences and relationships as important varied. Women who intentionally sought to place themselves and their children in a context reflective of diversity were typically mindful of pursuing interactions that would be mutually beneficial for all involved parties, both themselves and others. Alternatively, women who engaged diversity more by happenstance than intention tended to value the interactions for the personal benefits they could provide, with little thought to the impact on those with whom they were engaged.

Diverse activities

Each of the women referenced an intention that her child(ren) have access to a diverse range of experiences and opportunities, such as participation in music lessons and access to sports or physical activities, including opportunities defiant of stereotypical gender norms. For example, based on the children's own interests, Terra's daughter had played ice hockey and Corinne's son had danced ballet. As each of the women noted her desire to help facilitate these experiences for her child(ren), she spoke of a hope that such experiences and opportunities, and others like them, would broaden rather than limit her child(ren)'s knowledge of, access to, and understanding of the world. Engaging children in a variety of experiences was seen as a gateway through which to access continued opportunities. Terra, for example, said:

> I try to give [Aralyn] as many opportunities as I can. I think that's a priority. So if
> she wants to try something, like an activity or something, I let her do that. 'Cause I

think it's something I definitely didn't have and I want her to just try as many things that she wants.... [S]o maybe trying to expose her is a [parenting] priority to as many different things [as possible].

Katie mirrored this sentiment, saying:

[We want to] expose [the kids] to any other opportunity they might be interested in, whether it's going to be art or music or sports or, you know, even working at a young age.... [W]e just want to give [our son] the opportunity to be whatever he wants to be. And not put him in [a] corner.

Diverse cultures

But, exposure to isolated, child-chosen experiences wasn't the women's only hope. Particularly for Corinne and Katie, who grew up outside of Chicago and outside of urban spaces, the women also spoke directly about wanting their children to have cultural experiences that familiarized them with lifestyles different from their own day-to-day routines in Chicago. The diversity of experiences the women named as wanting to share with their children seemed grounded in positive aspects of their own regional upbringings. Corinne, who grew up in the mountains of western North Carolina, spoke of having a powerful relationship with nature. Her desire to foster that connection for her own children contributed to many of her parenting decisions, including seeking a home that had a yard, making frequent visits to green spaces and farms within driving distance of Chicago, visiting family and friends living in more rural and/or green spaces, and planning family trips heavily grounded in building nature-based experiences. Similarly, Katie, who grew up in a small New England town, was very intentional about using experiences to familiarize her children with that culture and way of life. The following conversation demonstrated that conviction:

Katie: Markus and I, our whole goal now is to just expose them as much as possible.

Kelly: What kinds of things do you want to expose them to?

Katie: Well, the first thing that came to my mind is this summer. Like, this summer when we go to Maine... we can just go and have almost, like, six to eight weeks to just be happy – like there's just this, like, glow of happiness there together. Because, they can like run– Now they can actually go to the beach by themselves. There are lots of friends. They can explore. They

can go on the water. They can, like, try, you know, go lobstering…. I guess the outdoor part is exciting. The family. Just the happiness, and the air is so healthy…. [S]o when I think of exposure, I think of there because I think of all we do in a day.

In this way, diversity was reflective of experiencing regional differences and fostering opportunities for children to engage cultural knowledge that the mothers valued from their own upbringing.

In addition to discussing the desire that their children have a diverse range of self-chosen and parent-guided opportunities and experiences, all of the mothers also explicitly named a desire that their children be exposed to a diverse range of people and life contexts. However, their narratives varied in how they talked about living amidst social diversity and in the reasons they gave for seeing it as important. While all of the women were pleased to have regular contact with some level of social diversity in their daily urban experiences, some of the women actively sought diverse contexts while others felt as if diversity had found them. Women who intentionally engaged in diverse contexts viewed such diversity as desirable for its potential benefits to all members of society, whereas women who engaged diversity more haphazardly tended to see the experiences as personally valuable with little thought to its impact on others.

Engaging diversity intentionally or by haphazard association

The first divergence was in whether the women saw themselves as serendipitously living in the presence of the diversity already around them or whether they saw themselves as having consciously chosen to live amidst that diversity. Katie was an example of someone who saw the social diversity of which she was a part as a contextual backdrop; she didn't choose it, but it was a part of her surroundings and something she felt was beneficial for her children. She said, "I like that our kids are so exposed to so many different nationalities,"[10] but she also talked about her own feelings of discomfort

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[10] In her narratives, Katie frequently used the phrase "different nationalities" to describe those who have immigrated to the United States (particularly within the past two generations) but also any person of color, including those who self-identify as American and/or whose family has been in the country for two or more generations. (Sometimes she also used "nationalities" to describe minority White ethnic or religious groups, including Italians and Jews.) When asked direct questions about race, Katie often responded using

when adjusting to an environment with more social diversity than she originally expected or found comfortable. In the following narrative, Katie described both her initial reactions to living amidst the broad diversity of Chicago's population and how she saw that diversity as beneficial to her children:

> For a while when we first lived here… I was like, "Wow!" I was having an identity crisis 'cause we'd go to these parties in the party room [in our housing complex]… [a]nd I'm like, "We're the only Caucasians here!" Like, whatever that means. Like, we're the only— It's just weird.… I'm a minority.… And then now, I'm *so* okay with that. I mean, [the kids'] first friends were like either from India [or] Italy.… [O]ur community here is *so* integrated. It's amazing. So… that's kinda neat. At first I was thrown off by it. I have to admit. I was just kind of like, "Where's the other, like, blond kid that [was]," I don't know, "like, born here?" [Katie laughed.] Or something? His grandparents were born in the U.S.?!… I don't know why I was thrown off. I was just so used to Connecticut where everyone was the same and— But now I'm really good with it. But anyway, so I think living in this community is a good ex[perience for the children] and going to [their school] is good. And living in the city. And I think that they're so open-minded. Like, they see— They give a homeless man money every Sunday. And, I mean, they see homeless people and every type of person and they actually get to know the *story* of that person. Like, they know the *story* of Terry who has one leg and is in a wheelchair and told us where he— You know, he's homeless, so I mean, they're just really out there in the world. But then, yet, they have the little world [at our lake house] in Michigan and the little world [visiting family] in Maine and they also see the other worlds too. Where it could be more homogenous, I guess. But I know they'd pick the city in a heartbeat because this is what they know. This is where they're born.

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the language of "nationalities." Part of her explanation for the linguistic preference was the following:

> I guess the reason I keep thinking deeper is because Markus is Latvian.… And, I guess right now I'm just so hyper-sensitive to Jewish, Latvian, Chinese-American, and any, you know, oh, they're from India... I mean, [I] just [focus on] nationalities more than the color of my skin.

This use of an umbrella term to describe any person who was not White, Christian, or native U.S.-born correlated with Katie's alignment with a color-blind stance, as described later in the section "Perspectives and Beliefs on Race and Racism."

Having named examples of differences in race, nationality, housing, and geography, Katie valued the human diversity around her because she felt it benefited her children's capacity to function successfully in a socially diverse world. But at no point in this narrative, or any other, did she talk about having intentionally chosen to raise her children surrounded by a broad mix of people.

On the other hand, Terra talked explicitly about having *chosen* the urban context of Chicago because of the social diversity it offered and viewing that as an ideal context in which to raise a child. When discussing her choice to live in the city of Chicago, rather than moving to the suburbs as many of her friends had, Terra gave several examples of how the diversity of the city had offered valuable opportunities to engage her daughter in conversation about social beliefs and ideas that would have been less likely to arise organically if living in the more socially-homogenous suburbs. She said:

> I think it's hard to say "city versus suburbs," but generically speaking, I think the mix of things my kid's exposed to — the mix of people [to whom] my child is exposed, the conversations we have compared to other conversations [people in the suburbs might] have.... This [example I'm going to tell you] would never happen in any suburb I know. Like, it could, but maybe not as likely. [Aralyn] came home one day and she said, "Mommy, So-and-so... has two daddies and no mommy. How is that?" And we had a conversation and I went, "Well, you know, some people have two daddies. Some people have two mommies. Some people have a mommy and a daddy. Some people have only a mommy-" I went into the whole — every possible [family configuration]. And she was like, "Oh. Okay."... And I don't know if that conversation would've happened — I mean, it could, cuz, you know, there's people of all sorts everywhere. But I think it's just in the city you get that mix, [that] concentration.... [T]here's the homeless guys that parks in my neighbor's backyard and [Aralyn]'s like, "What's that?" and "Why don't they have a house?" And we have all these conversations about how lucky we are and how fortunate we are so I just think that there's a lot of different things of that cultural aspect. Also, I see a lot of families that are just — Not that people don't adopt in the suburbs; that's stupid, and I'm not trying — But in a generalization [in the city] there's a lot of White people who have Black children, and they have Asian children because they've adopted. I think that's neat. Just to have her experience that.

Family configurations, the consequences of poverty, and adoption were issues Terra wanted to openly address with her daughter, especially when the subjects arose organically and were based on her own lived experiences. Living amidst a diverse human tapestry had given Terra the context to engage her daughter in conversations she deemed valuable and important. When Terra spoke about living in the city, she explicitly named it as a conscious decision, one with benefits and disadvantages. But a key advantage was the range of people and life experiences to which it gave her and her family access.

Both Terra and Katie valued the ways living amidst diversity had the potential to equip their children with a broader awareness of the world, but the difference between them was that Terra saw herself as embedded within that context by intentional choice, while Katie saw her inclusion as more incidental, but desirable nonetheless.

The benefits of engaging diversity

The women also differed in the ways they described the importance of diversity, whether they described its benefit as personal or as both personal and social. Katie understood diversity to be an enrichment of the social context in which one is a part. And having comfort amidst that diversity can be personally beneficial as one engages future interactions with a range of diverse people. Terra took the idea a step further, describing one benefit of diversity as the way it can normalize differences, rather than marking one thing as "normal" and everything else as atypical or "other." Terra wanted her daughter's baseline understanding of the world to be such that difference, rather than homogeneity, was the norm. She said:

> I hope that she's learning that there are different kinds of people and we have to accept everybody. I actually go out of my way and try to do things [so] that she's exposed to [pause] as many kinds of things as she can be exposed to. Like for example, I bought her — and people think I'm funny, but I think it's good — like, I bought her an African-American baby doll for Christmas one year. She honestly didn't think anything of it. She just was like, "Okay. This is my other baby doll." And, you know, I don't know if a lot of people have that in their house. Like I don't think a lot of people do. I mean I've been to a lot of people's houses and they don't. So, I do, [and] I kind of go out of my way. I want her to realize that not everybody's the same.

In her parenting, Terra sought to have the presence of diversity help normalize difference in the mind of her child, and she saw an embracing of diversity as an important social perspective to embody.

Corinne sought to extend the question of "Diversity for what purpose?" even further by asking "Who benefits from diversity?" She said, "[I]t's hard to get away from thinking about how to broaden your child's horizon and how that will benefit your child." Rather than thinking only about how diversity would benefit her own children, she tried to also be aware of the repercussions engaging diversity could have for others. She said:

> I try to be careful when thinking about diversity because I don't want diversity to be there for the benefit of [just some of] the people.... [W]hen I was [a student] at Yale... I was considered a "diversity" kind of "enhancement." And I was like, "Well, who are you enhancing with my diversity really?"

Drawing from her own experience of feeling used for the purpose of diversifying someone else's experience, Corinne was hesitant to intentionally reproduce that experience for others. She expressed a feeling of conflict over how to balance a desire for diversity and a resistance to using people for one's own benefit, and she spoke about the importance of understanding *why* you value diversity so that you can approach it in a way that seeks to treat all parties with humanity and respect. She said:

> Sometimes, selfish[ly], I want the boys to be, you know, broadminded and know a lot about a lot of the different backgrounds. And I think that all White people need to recognize that [desire] first and foremost, because if they don't recognize their own ulterior motives, I mean, yes, it's a good thing for people to have better racial understanding and it starts first with a little bit of "I want my boys to be well-rounded!"... And I don't think that that's a bad thing, but it can feel a little bit like, "Well, [being well-rounded,] that's for *you* but that's not for the greater culture."... I also want [my kids] to [pause] *know* what their own privilege means. And I want to try to keep them from having a sense of entitlement, unless it's, you know, an entitlement over basic rights and freedoms — that they should always feel that everyone should have. But not a sense of entitlement of getting a job or an education or, you know, having someone bring them something or treat them in a certain way.

Just as Terra and Katie agreed before her, Corinne acknowledged that there was value in gaining a wide breadth of cultural knowledge based upon interactions with a broad

range of people. But, what she said that the others did not was that social location matters. She acknowledged that social differences have consequences in our world, and in the context of the United States, her family's status as White, middle-class Christians privileged them over others who did not carry the same identity markers. So while she saw cultivating an array of cultural experiences as important for understanding the diversity present in the world, failing to put that knowledge into the context of larger systems of social control and social power threatened to heap additional advantage on those who were already advantaged, while failing to benefit the "diversity enhancers" – those already disadvantaged in the larger societal structures because of the things that marked them as "diverse" in the first place.

In some ways, Corinne's narrative reflected a shift in understanding from a model that placed diversity as an inanimate backdrop from which active protagonists could benefit to one in which diversity was embodied by living, foreground players and all participants could collectively benefit from shared knowledge and experiences. The second model advocated the use of diversity to see, acknowledge, and possibly work to change the unjust consequences of social difference in our world. The narratives of Katie, Terra, and Corinne showcased a varied understanding of "exposure" to diversity as ranging from mere contact with those different from one's self to meaningful interpersonal engagement with others that took into consideration the experiences of the other parties and sought mutual benefits. While all of the women expressed an explicit desire for the presence of social diversity in the lives of their children, when they viewed its presence as a central, rather than a peripheral, part of the parenting process, they also began to mark the purpose of diversity as needing to be about its potential benefits to the community or the greater society, rather than merely to one's self.

Acceptance of and comfort with human differences – Who is your child in relation to others?

One role of parenting is to socialize children on strategies of social interaction and its many nuances (Grusec & Hastings, 2007). Modeling social norms and rules (for example, differences in etiquette between greeting your grandmother and greeting the clerk at the post office) and helping children develop social skills for recognizing situations of social safety (for example, "stranger danger") are typical components of guiding children to appropriately engage with the social world. In addition, whether explicitly or implicitly, parents offer guidance on the appropriate ways to understand one's self in relation to those seen as different (in whatever way that may be) and ways to appropriately engage such people (Grusec & Davidov, 2007).

Corinne, Katie, and Terra all sought to support their children's comfort amidst social diversity and intended to support their children's development of social skills for engaging successfully with a diverse range of people. Differences arose in the women's intentions for undertaking such a goal and in the ways they viewed themselves in relation to those who were socially different than them. Women who viewed themselves as embedded alongside diverse others in a shared community typically valued engagement across lines of difference as a path to both personal and communal benefits and connections. Alternatively, some women approached social diversity with a sense of defensiveness and a concern that their children might struggle to know, value, and defend their own identities within a context of potentially confusing diversity. Women in this group typically spoke of successfully engaging with diverse others as a personally beneficial skill, with little or no attention to the impact of such engagements for those with whom they interacted.

Chicago is inhabited by a socially diverse populace, and within their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all explicitly acknowledged the presence of that diversity and expressed the desire that their children be accepting of all people, including those seen as dissimilar from themselves. Katie, for example, said, "[P]eople have different holidays. People have different religions. People have different ancestry and beliefs or different countries that they're from. And [I want the kids to] just really appreciate where that other person's coming from." She continued, later, saying, "[I want people, including my kids,] to appreciate each other for who they are. And not be judgmental. And then, try to just all get along the best you can."

Terra expressed a similar recognition that diversity is a standard component of everyday life and that efforts should be made to accept others and the many ways we differ without placing judgment upon those differences. She said:

[T]here are different races and religions and cultures and some people have money and some people don't, and some people are married and some people aren't, and some people – You know, just like all the different situations that could be. And that doesn't mean that that person's better or that person's worse. It just is what it is. And then we just gotta kinda all work together and live together, and it's okay to be friends with that person [who's different from you].

All of the women agreed that the ability to interact positively amidst difference (in other words, to have good "people skills") is an asset to anyone who does it well. Engaging with a wide variety of people offers the personal benefit of, as Terra says, "laying the foundation for the future – for whatever profession or interactions [a person]'s going to have in the world, in business. Interactions are important. [So is] being familiar with different people." To these women, helping their children develop a working knowledge of human diversity and the ability to interact successfully with others was seen as a way to help breed a personal comfort for engaging with those different from one's self. And that comfort was seen as a positive personal and professional trait in our increasingly heterogeneous work environments and world.

Corinne alone highlighted a hope that in addition to the benefits her children gain from engaging with diverse others that those with whom her children interact would also benefit. Speaking specifically about interactions across lines of racial differences, she said:

[M]y goal would be to expose the boys to things like [racially integrated activity groups for children], to the extent that I can. But then I'm also feeling like, "How do I do that?" How do I do that and make it a beneficial process for *everybody* instead of it being that old chestnut of "Well, who's the diversity for here?" I mean, selfishly, yes, I *do* want my children to benefit from knowing people of different races and I want them to be able to grow as people but I *hope* that other people will also benefit from that.

A key difference between the women's narratives was the stance from which each explained the importance of developing quality people skills. Corinne spoke about the desire for her children to develop a relational understanding of self, such that they would

see themselves in the shared context of a larger community and be attentive to the ways in which benefits bestowed upon them are shared by others or denied others. Terra, too, spoke from a place of wanting her daughter to understand herself in relation to others. She said, "I want her to understand that not everyone is in the same situation.—There's [*sic*] people in better situations, and there're people in way, way worse situations." Corinne and Terra both spoke about the desire for their children to see their personal context as embedded in a broader community – a community in which others' stories and everyday norms differ, in which that spectrum of differences is understood as typical, and in which individuals' stories and experiences interact and intersect with one another; they wanted their children to understand that as individuals we impact and are impacted by others. Both also spoke of wanting their children to grow in awareness of their own social privilege, particularly in terms of race and social class, so that they can better understand the complex reality of their social context.

Katie spoke differently about the purpose of her children's growing ability to engage in a diverse world. In many ways she spoke from a place of defensiveness, expressing the desire that her children not be intimidated by others and that they develop the ability to stand up for themselves and their own identity when confronted by those who are different. She saw exposure to diversity as a key way to prevent feeling intimidated by those who are different, saying:

> I just want to really make sure they get the whole "people" thing, you know?... Because we definitely talk to people of all, all kinds – like older men, who you might even be *scared* of. And I try to tell them, you know, that's just the outside, but in the inside they're really nice. So we talk a *lot* about that, so I bet that they won't be very *intimidated* by people, by any kind of exterior attitude or, you know, age or something like that.

Later she added:

> I have a feeling I'm turning more and more urban everyday and like [Katie sighed deeply] getting more and more open-minded everyday, which is good for the kids, in a way. Except that, they're gonna need to know how to stand up for thems[elves and] their own beliefs when they get into that situation. If somebody makes fun— … I mean, they need to just have a[n] internal understanding of how it all works I guess.

So, while Katie welcomed her children's engagement with a wide variety of people, her language suggested a desire to help them build internal strength in their own identities in order to withstand perceived intimidation or conflict from those seen as different. In many ways, Katie maintained an "us" and "them" mentality, seeing her children as permanently separate from those marked as different, unlike Corinne and Terra who seemed to see their children as in community with those marked as different, despite those differences.

When asked what her role might be in helping her children think about differences in their city, their school, or their world, Katie said, "I'd like to teach them different viewpoints. But... I don't want them to be confused." So while she wanted them to be knowledgeable and accepting of human differences, she also seemed to struggle with an assumption that supporting knowledge of social differences would distance her children from their own family's identity and values in undesirable ways.

Children learn through experience and are active participants in their own learning.

Parenting typically includes making efforts to assist children in the successful adoption of information and ideas shared with them (Grusec & Davidov, 2007; Maccoby, 1992). One's beliefs about how a person learns and about the ways in which they come to understand the world are critical for framing the actions taken to successfully share the desired messages or ideas. Within their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra were in general agreement that children are active participants in their own learning and that they learn about the world and how to function appropriately in it through their experiences, both direct and indirect, and specifically through acts of doing, seeing, and communicating. Katie said:

> [Kids learn new things] from their experiences.... I know every day is such a big day in the life of children, and so how they experience new things or learn from them — It's just amazing. I mean, every day, every single thing we do is like a new adventure for *them*.

The newness with which children engage the world marks each event and each experience as a learning opportunity, unlike with adults — the majority of whose experiences follow patterns of regularity and normalcy that have been built over long periods of time. Often times, children's early experiences lay the foundations by which they compare everything else, and thus, each early experience carries weight for how children come to understand the world.

Corinne, Katie, and Terra agreed that children learn from a wide range of sources, including family, peers, and media, and each source contributes to children's understanding of the world, though to differing degrees of power and intensity during different times in children's lives. Terra said:

> [T]here's [*sic*] too many variables to say, "This [single socializing agent] is what shapes your kid. It's X." There's [*sic*] too many variables that they're exposed to. I think all of those [variables] play a part. I think depending on the kid you have and their personality and their DNA and, you know, whatever's inside them will take and grab on to different parts of [variables in the outside world] a little bit more strongly. I also think that at different points in a child's life certain things are more strongly effective than others. Like right now, when they're young, I think parents have a very prominent role and can really influence a child. I think when they get older their friends have a [more] prominent role.

All of the mothers agreed, as Terra suggested, that parents have a powerful influence on the socialization of their children, particularly during their early years. In explaining the power of parental modeling through both words and actions, Terra went on to say:

> [Kids]'re very observant.... [T]hey just question everything so I think [that] how you answer them can shape what they take in. So I think you have to be very careful of your answers as a parent. They will pick up on everything – if you judge someone, if you make a snide remark, if you – And it's hard, because I think everyone has a little bit of that in 'em. And so you have to be really careful; especially when they're like three, four, five [years old] they pick up on everything. So, I think they just ask a lot of questions and then how you answer also kind of shapes things.

Corinne mirrored Terra's idea that young children are receptive to socialization from many sources, but suggested that parental modeling has a powerful impact on children's socialization even before the age of three. She said:

> I feel like there are lots of intersections where the child comes to understand the world. I don't feel like it's all one [thing] or the other.... I do think that parents are very important during those first three years before children, sort of, wake up. [Corinne laughed.] You know? They're sort of in dream-time for those first three years. And they don't remember a lot about it. And, I've had friends who say, "Oh, don't worry about what you did today. They won't remember it later." And I was like, "But they *know* it. It's not that they don't remember it. It's in the *fabric* of who they are."

Corinne believed that children learn through experience from the beginning of life onward, and while they may not remember explicitly learning specific ideas, those beliefs are embedded in their experiences from their earliest interactions on and create the foundations upon which all other learning takes place.

Among the mothers there was also consensus that children are not mere receptacles of knowledge and ideas, but are active participants in their own learning. Children are active creators, shapers, and interpreters of knowledge. While parents may intend for children to adopt specific lessons or ideas, the ways in which children understand, interpret, and adopt the messages they receive may or may not reflect the parents' goals. As such, the mothers spoke about both the importance of being in relationship with their children as learners and of adapting their parenting approaches to respond to their

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children's shifting understanding. They described taking both actions in an effort to more successfully guide children towards adopting the values and beliefs held in esteem by their parents. Corinne said:

> [Parenting] is a journey that you're taking together [with your child(ren)]. And they're teaching you as much as you're teaching them.... [T]o get up and to posit yourself as the all-knowing authority is probably not a great way of trying to teach people.

Describing what that reciprocal learning process looked like in her own parenting, Katie said:

> I am fine with admitting that I am not perfect. And I think I am already reaching out to [my son] Ian [and]... I feel like it's okay. I want to be an authority figure and be his mom and all that, but it's okay that he knows what things I can't do — like things he can help me with. And I do let him help me.

In her family, each member, including the children, was acknowledged as an individual with learning strengths and weaknesses and the ability to teach and share knowledge with others. Children weren't seen as merely taking in what the world showed them. They were understood as capable of actively participating in their own learning and the learning of others.

Terra, too, understood her daughter as an active contributor to her own engagement with the world and her own understanding of it. Describing what that knowledge meant for the ways she worked to steer and support Aralyn's learning, Terra said:

> I think I let [Aralyn] kind of steer it a little bit. When she starts saying things or asking questions, then I kinda answer to the level it needs to be answered. You know. Like, I've told you, she came home and said, "So-and-so has two daddies." And I just said... "Oh yeah. Some people have this. Some people have that. Well, I just had a mommy." You know? "Some people just have a daddy." And then she was like, "Oh. Okay." And then we moved on with it. You know?... And then when she has a deeper question about that later [I'll answer it]... So I kind of let her drive it and I just kind of navigate as she's driving and see where it takes us.

Across their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra were very consistent in their understanding of children as active, participatory learners. They expressed a shared set

of beliefs that children learn through the experiences of seeing, doing, and communicating, and they reiterated the belief that parents are a powerful influence on children's early socialization.

ACTIONS AND PRACTICES CONCERNING PARENTING

The actions taken by adults in the parenting of their children exist in relationship with their beliefs about parenting and with their intended parenting goals. In this study, Corinne, Katie, and Terra described their general parenting actions and practices as fitting within three categories: 1) familial modeling; 2) verbal communication with their children – particularly the use of direct dialogue; and 3) the shaping of children's life experiences – with particular attention to the role of material culture and either enabling or placing restrictions on experiences accessible to their child(ren). Seeking to understand how mothers envision the application and implementation of their ideological attitudes and ideals about parenting in practical actions manifested through routinely lived, real-world practices can provide a vantage from which to interpret the congruence between parenting beliefs and parenting actions.

Actions reflect values – Parents are role models in word and deed

Across all three women's narratives was a consistent conviction that parents are role models for their children. They believed that their actions – both what they said and what they did – were a reflection of their values, or should be. Believing that children receive and respond to both explicit and implicit messages introduced through their experiences, including seeing, hearing, communicating, and doing, Corinne, Katie, and Terra sought to employ general parenting actions that aligned accordingly, focusing on parental modeling, communication, and fostering experiences that reflected and encouraged the adoption of desired values. Across the board, there was a correlation between the women's beliefs about how children learn and the parental actions they sought to employ to help shape their children's growing understanding of and participation in the world.

Corinne, Katie, and Terra all spoke about their important parental responsibility to serve as consistent and positive models of values and beliefs for their children, especially during the early years. Terra said:

> I try to be very careful about what I say around [Aralyn], even if it's something that I really want to say out loud. [Terra laughed.] You know? I think that at her stage in life right now, her parents are her biggest role model. And that will change, but right now I've gotta do… "Please"s and "Thank you"s and all that kind of stuff.

All of the mothers were keenly aware that their children were intensely attuned to the words and actions of the adults in their lives, especially their parents. They noted that their children often mimicked or reproduced behaviors they witnessed, or the children made assumptions about the motivating attitudes behind the behaviors they saw and would adopt or act upon those assumptions.

As example, both Terra and Corinne spoke about the importance they placed upon their children viewing ideas of gender such that boys and girls were understood to be equally welcome to engage in any task of their choosing, even (and sometimes especially) if their participation crossed traditional gender boundaries. The mothers intentionally sought to demonstrate their personal commitment to these ideals through their words and actions, with hopes that their demonstrations would support their children's adoption of the same values. Conscious that her language could influence her child's understanding of gender boundaries, Terra said, "I don't ever say 'Girls do this and boys do that.' I've tried to really stay away from that whole thing.... I want her to believe she can do anything a boy can do."

Similarly, Corinne spoke about the power and importance of having parental models whose everyday actions reflect the values of gender equality she hoped her children would grow to adopt. She said:

> I hope that [the boys] know that they can be a man without being [dismissive or oppressive to women], and I think [my husband] Robert does a very good job of modeling [that]. Robert does a good deal of cleaning. He does laundry.... He's doesn't have that much experience with cooking so he doesn't do as much, but he does what he can. He talks about women's work in equal terms as men's work. He doesn't reinforce a lot of things [that would encourage division between genders].

In the pursuit of socializing her children with specific ideas about gender, Corinne listed several actions integrated into the everyday routines of the family that she hoped would reflect to her children the values she and her husband wanted to encourage.

Corinne also spoke about the challenge of promoting specific values when children receive contradictory messages from other sources, including peers, other adults, and media. This idea of feeling that one's parenting values are in conflict with values put forth in other aspects of everyday life was a serious concern expressed by all of the mothers. Generally, the women felt that their best defense in what felt like a battle to socialize their children with the "right" values was to remain diligent and steadfast in their own

convictions, working to be explicit with their children about their values and how those values can, and do, play out in their everyday experiences. Parental presence, engagement, and consistency were marked by the mothers as extremely important for demonstrating values to children and for encouraging children's adoption of those values.

As example, Corinne spoke at length throughout her narratives about the importance she placed upon belonging to a larger community and upon building positive relationships with other people. She wanted to pass those values to her children because she felt that being in rich, meaningful relationships with others encouraged individuals to see themselves in the complex context of a larger society and fostered an investment in taking responsibility for the ways one's actions impact others rather than having only personal consequences. When discussing the challenging process of trying to share these values with her children, Corinne spoke about working to be a consistent, transparent, and living model for her own children to see and follow. She said:

> [I]n whatever context you raise children, if you can have strong partnerships around you that is just so crucial…. [I]t doesn't have to be a spousal relationship. I just think if your children can see you in strong alliances and strong community that that can really help.

She spoke of working intentionally to have her life reflect to her children the values she hoped they too would work to embody in their own lives. She, like the other mothers, was trying to match her actions to her words, such that the children would receive a consistent, clear message about their parent's values and beliefs.

Terra, too, spoke about the diligence with which she sought to have her actions reflect her values, such that the effort might help her daughter understand and embrace the same values herself. When answering the question "When trying to enact your idea of being a successful parent, how do you implement your ideals?" she responded with an example that demonstrated her integration of words, actions, and personal experiences to model for her daughter the values undergirding Terra's parenting choices. She said:

> [I have to work to live my parenting ideals] every day. It's a challenge every day. Like, you know, being thankful, for example. [I am] reinforcing [it] all the time… [T]rying to show her the value of money and how it's not endless…. Like, she wanted these shoes, for example…. They were really beady, bedazzlely-like shoes. I'm like, "Okay, let's go see how much they are," cuz she never asks for anything. [We look at the shoes and] I'm like,… "They're $75. I am *not* buying

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these shoes for you." And I know people that would just buy them [but]... I try to explain to her, "Well, that's a lot of money." So we went home and then she kept asking. She wasn't like upset about it; she's just kind of asking me for it. And I was trying to get the message across.... So I took her piggy bank out and we poured all her money out and she had $50 in there. I told her "If she really wanted those shoes, I would take *all* of her money away." And I showed her and then I would put in the extra 20.... And when she saw that, she's like, "Oh no. I don't want those shoes." [Terra laughed.] Like, she processed that was a *lot* of money.

Through a combined utilization of action and discussion, as well as a belief that Aralyn is an active participant in her own learning and understanding, Terra sought to relay to her daughter the beliefs she held about the value of money.

The importance of aligning words and actions

What was most consistent among all of the mothers was the importance they placed on verbal communication between parents and children to make values explicit. Conversation was often the first strategy they mentioned when discussing their efforts to support their children's adoption of specific beliefs or values and their efforts to explain the ways those principles applied to and were reflected in daily life. The mothers used speech to name and explain their values and value systems to their children. Even so, the women were also acutely aware that actions often speak louder than words and that their own actions, as well as the actions of others, have a powerful influence on their children. Terra used the example of putting her daughter to bed to illustrate the importance of alignment between words and actions. She said:

I say what I mean and I mean what I say. And [Aralyn] knows that.... When her dad puts her to bed or when I put her to bed, it's two different scenarios. I walk in the room. I put her to bed. If my husband's not home, I kiss her, say "I love you. Mommy's not coming back in here." I don't hear from that kid. [If] my husband's in the house... [i]t's, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Dad —" and he will run in there with water — I'm like, "You are just feeding the problem! What are you doing?!... You don't understand what goes on when you're not home. There's none of this.... She goes to bed!" All you're doing [I tell him] is teaching her that when she calls you, you go in.

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Terra recognized that when a parent fails to align their words with their actions, children are likely to prioritize the adult's actions. Aralyn learned that once her mother said goodnight, she would not return to Aralyn's room (unless, of course, there was an emergency). She also learned that, while her father might say the same words, if she called, he would come. His actions defined what she understood to be the truth of the situation more than his words.

Framing children's experiences to foster desired values

Each mother shared a similar awareness that value-laden messages are embedded in every aspect of their children's lives and impact children's understanding of and engagement with the world. Each also recognized that implicit messages matter and carry weight in their children's process of understanding the world. In addition, all of the women identified the power of material goods, material culture, and personal experiences to convey, support, and/or interfere with children's adoption of parent-desired values. This awareness was present throughout the mothers' narratives. Terra and Corinne spoke about their intentional purchasing of toys, children's books, and other resources for their children that reflected values they wanted to share, such as Terra's purchasing of a Black baby doll for her daughter to support the idea that racial diversity and inclusions in everyday life is normal, rather than different, special, or atypical. As we've seen, Terra and Katie spoke about their intentional resistance to buying material goods, like toys and shoes, simply because their children wanted them. The mothers felt that to purchase material goods without thoughtful discretion would contradict their value-based intentions to teach their children about the worth of money and about the importance of earning material goods. Both Katie and Corinne spoke with concern about the messages their children might be receiving about violence from television, other media, and peers. Corinne also spoke about her apprehension surrounding the value-laden messages her children might receive from advertising and commercialism. She said:

> Noam Chomsky had this whole patter about making children work.... They just become lobbyists for commercial interests on TV. So, I think that [my children's] actual screen time is less of a concern for me than [their] *commercial* exposure. Um, because I *do* think that that can really contribute to a sense of entitlement and a sense of material culture as a spiritual answer, really. As like a way to identify yourself... Because they're selling a lifestyle so much of the time. And when

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you're young, I think you're extremely vulnerable to those ideas of lifestyle and if… you're not getting a spiritual identity— And that doesn't have to be Jesus Christ necessarily. It can just be having a sense of who you are in the world and the importance of that, versus your importance being as a consumer. So, I'm concerned about media images that way.

Corinne named values she saw embedded in commercial culture and she marked them as oppositional to the values she hoped her children would adopt. As a result, in this context, she had chosen to limit her children's access to experiences and messages she found undesirable and/or contradictory to the messages she was trying to instill through her own words and actions.

And yet, while there were situations in which each of the mothers limited their children's engagement with specific experiences because of the undesired, value-based messages they felt the activities endorsed, there are also contexts in which the women intentionally engaged their children in activities or experiences they thought would be beneficial to their children's adoption of desired values. For example, Terra and Katie both spoke about enrolling their children in sports. Katie said, "[W]ith Ian I've invested a lot of time on sports because I think learning how to play as a team [is important], and… fitting in with the other boys." Katie valued her children's capacity to work well with others and she saw sports as a context in which her children could practice and develop those skills.

Engagement in everyday experiences also offered opportunities for parents to support their children's value-based decision-making and actions. When asked how her intentions to foster empathy and discourage entitlement were lived out in the context of her family, Corinne said:

> [W]ith the way that we try to get [the kids] to understand the consequence of their behavior towards each other and towards other children and towards us, we are constantly asking them to think about how they would feel in that situation.… [W]e try to get them to think about the consequences that way, as opposed to "You're in timeout!" You know, it's more about… "Do you see [that] your brother is really sad and your brother will feel frightened to be around you if he thinks that you might hit him?" You know, just trying to think about empathy that way.

Through her narrative Corinne demonstrated an awareness that parental actions and practices are never value neutral.   They all have value-based foundations and

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consequences. As such, actions reflect values and values are reflected in actions. All of the mothers expressed this recognition and took it into account in their parenting actions and strategies.

Through all of these examples, several key findings were clear. First, the mothers recognized that children are affected by both explicit and implicit messages from a complex array of socializing sources ranging from family and peers to media and material goods. And those messages convey specific value-based ideas and beliefs. The mothers also recognized that verbal communication, physical actions, and personal experiences all contribute to children's ongoing, active process of working to understand the world around them and seeking to find their place (and their value systems) within it. They were also keenly aware that there are many, often contradictory messages and value-systems to which their children are exposed. Believing that children learn through their experience (seeing, hearing, communicating, doing, etc.), the mothers sought to align their parenting actions accordingly, utilizing strategies of parental modeling, talk, action, and fostering personal experiences to reflect and actively encourage their children's adoption of parent-desired values.

PERSPECTIVES AND BELIEFS ON RACE AND RACISM

While Corinne, Katie, and Terra all self-identified as White, middle-class, heterosexual women, their beliefs around issues of race and racism in the United States reflected an array of perspectives that rarely aligned fully. In discussing race, each defined the term and its relevance in our modern world, including its consequences for people who identify as White. Debating whether Whiteness connotes social advantage or disadvantage in our society brought up varied responses which the women explained through their own stories of racial identity – how they saw themselves racially, how they understood themselves in relation to others, and the value systems they placed upon their racial identities. In defining racism, nuanced explanations demonstrated a range of understandings as to the individual and/or institutional nature of racism, what counts as racism (whether racism can be subtle as well as blatant), and whether racism should be understood as an absolute and permanent measure of being "racist" or "not racist" or should be understood as a shifting identity measured along an unbounded continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist." The women's ideas about the power of hard work to enable success also contributed to their thinking about race and racism. And finally, the women discussed whether or not positive racial change is attainable personally, locally, and/or systemically, what such changes would look like, and who is responsible for making them.

Defining race and its relevance in our modern world

After their first interviews, Corinne, Katie, and Terra were asked to talk about the word "race" and how they define it, such that as conversations continued the word could be used with a shared understanding of its meaning. In their definitions, all of the women identified race as more complex than simply the color of one's skin, but they expressed different levels of confidence in the accuracy of their definitions and differed in their inclusion or failure to include discussions of the roles of racial ascription and social power in their definitions of race. All of the mothers also explained that race matters in our modern world, even though they wish it didn't, and race has concrete, and predominantly negative, cultural meanings and social consequences. The women's perspectives differed as to whether or not they felt that race mattered in their own lives or only in the lives of others.

When asked the question, "What does the word 'race' mean to you?" the women expressed differing degrees of confidence in defining the word. Terra said succinctly and immediately, "Race means culture, color, ethnicity... [and] religion." And she was quick to add:

> I think that race matters globally. I mean people fighting over things.... I think it can matter definitely in terms of jobs, judgment, and neighborhoods. And so, I think it does matter. Um, you know, [personally] you just kind of take it as it comes. But I don't really think about it too much.

Katie was a bit less certain of her response. She said:

> I guess [race is] differences between people. And that would be their surroundings. Um, where they were born. Where their ancestors are from. The[ir] value system and religious system. Color seems to be almost one of the last things I think about, but I guess, [race is] the color of your skin, which is so, almost, superficial.

She later added:

> I think the "simple" definition of race [is] somebody might say White, Black, Asian, I don't even [know what else]— But I definitely look deeper. I'm more into, um, heritage and religion, I guess. But it's, I guess that's not really what race means. Maybe it means more the color of your skin. Not really. But I mean — ... Or even your financial [situation] or your neighborhood. Your socio-economic [status], is what I should've said.

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Like Terra, Katie understood race to be a complex and somewhat indefinite intersection of numerous personal and cultural traits and markers. But the more she sought to offer a simple explanation of the concept, the more uncertain she became in her definition. But when asked, like Terra, if she thought race mattered, she said:

> [N]o, I personally don't.... I mean it shouldn't matter.... I mean, children aren't born with any preconceived notions about race, but if their parents give them any bias or bigotry then that's where [race "mattering"] stems from. And that may come from the grandparents or generations [past], but, I think, that's where race is defined – by the past. Past generations.... I mean, race, if we're just talking about the color of your skin, what country you're born in, where your ancestors are from, well, okay, that's something you're born with. But if it *matters* for something, then, I think, that comes from other people. And bigotry.

Katie highlighted that race carries significance in the contexts in which it is used to divide and mistreat people. She saw herself, however, as predominantly removed from race as a concept that mattered.

Like Katie, Terra also made a connection between the definition of race and its inextricable social connection to racism. While Katie talked about making judgments based on race as a process learned through socialization, as a biologist and practicing biology educator Terra used her knowledge of genetics to reinforce the irrationality of making judgments upon people because of traits associated with race. She said:

> [W]hen we talk about genetics we talk about how between me and the guy sitting next to you on the bus... you're *very* similar to them, and there's only those genes that have very minimal [differences] – Because we all have the same genes [and]... chemicals we need to make us us, and there's a very *tiny* amount that makes you different.... The bottom line is you're more similar to people, even if they are a different color than you, than you are different.... And yet we judge each other... on that itty-bitty difference.... 'Cause everything else is the same. 'Cause we're all coded the same to the same proteins.... You know, the genetic thing I think is really powerful. We all have the same *blueprints* with a little bit of window-dressings that are different, I always say. "The houses are *all* built the same with a little bit of window-dressings that are different."

Corinne, too, referenced the role of both socialization and biology when offering her definition of race and her ideas on its social significance. Her definition was perhaps

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the most complex of the women's, which may be explained, in part, because she also spoke of having spent considerable time previously contemplating questions of race and its consequences. When asked her definition of race, she said:

> Well, I've had *so* many discussions and classes and read about it in so many ways that on a purely, I guess, academic level, there's really no such thing as race! [Corinne laughed.] You know, there's greater genetic variability sometimes in families than there is between people of two different races. And so, what is race if it's not something that is genetically defined? I remember coming in contact with that information, and it just really kind of *blew* my mind because you're just taught from such a young age that it's just we're different, different, different, different, different, different. And so, well, then what are the ways that we're different? And if it really is just a few physical characteristics, that's [insignificant]… because there're such variability even there. Um, but [race] doesn't really end up having a lot of meaning *except* the meaning that it's given culturally. So that's really the only definition that there is. That it's a cultural referent that has just become so embedded that it's very difficult to get away from. And so, culturally speaking, race is groups of people that are ascribed primarily physical characteristics first, and then they're also ascribed cultural characteristics secondarily. And they're usually ascribed those characteristics by others and frequently not themselves. So, in my mind [race is] an "other" defined category…. [T]here certainly are self-definitions or group definitions, but in terms of how race *works*, it seems to me that it ends up being mostly other defined. And the conflict between group definition and other definition is *always* a problem…. [I]t just ends up defining our interactions and who it's okay to be with and… who you are just with!

For Corinne, race could not be understood in separation from its social implications. She said:

> [Race] only matters because people make it matter…. [R]ace does matter, and I think the way it matters to me is in… trying to identify the ways in which it matters and then trying to, um, mitigate those ways. Because most of the ways that it matters are negative! I can think of very few ways that it matters that it's positive.

One key element of Corinne's narratives that was absent from those of Katie and Terra was the idea of racial ascription – the concept of a person's racial identity being not necessarily consistent, or self-chosen, but being continually assessed and assigned by an

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outside person, group, or institution. As such, those who might self-identify as White may be seen by others as a person of color. Similarly, someone who might self-identify as non-White, may be recognized as White by those around him or her. Corinne gave an example of this second situation, saying:

> [T]here are very Caucasian looking people who will tell me they don't feel Caucasian at all. I dated a guy, a Turkish guy, for about seven years who said that he wasn't White, and I would've sworn [Corinne slapped her leg with her hand for emphasis] he was a White guy! I'm like, "You're White." But he said, "No. I'm not White. No. I'm not White at all."

The conflict brought to bear by racial ascription marked Corinne's explanation of race as distinctly different from both Katie's and Terra's because of the way it highlighted race as inconsistent, shifting, and socially-created rather than certain and unchanging. In addition, her definition made a stronger connection between race and social power.

Two things, however, were consistent across all of the women's definitions of race. First, all of the women expressed some level of desire to deny race as real. Katie described the idea of race as "almost superficial." Katie and Terra both marked race as something that shouldn't matter or shouldn't be a big deal. And Corinne named race as a social construction. While all were clear that they *wished* race had no real or tangible consequences in our everyday world, the degree to which they acknowledged its *actual* presence varied, particularly in reference to whether race mattered to them personally and to their day-to-day lives.

Second, despite wishing that race were irrelevant, within their explanations all of the women described race as a social marker with specific cultural connotations and consequences, primarily those of conflict, division, inequality, and abuse experienced by people of color. Very little discussion separated talk of race from talk of racism or mistreatment based on racial ascriptions.

Being White – A benefit or a disadvantage?

During conversation, Corinne, Katie, and Terra were each asked to share their thoughts, broadly speaking, on what it means to be White in our society. They were also asked whether they saw being White (or being seen as White) in our society as advantageous or, alternatively, as disadvantageous. All of the women named at least one specific way in which people of color are treated differently and lesser than Whites in our society because of their racial identity, but the women took a range of starkly different stances on the lived consequences of being White and on whether being White is a benefit or a drawback for living in our society generally and within the specific urban context of Chicago. For some, Whiteness was seen as a benefit because it allowed individuals to appear "normal" or "ordinary" amid the larger populace, rather than being singled out for being different. In addition, from the perspective of some White mothers, Whiteness also connoted an identity advantaged by socially embedded preferential treatment such that they had no concerns that racial stereotypes or racist social structures would create barriers to education, employment, or general prosperity for themselves or for their children. Alternatively, some White mothers perceived their Whiteness as a disadvantage, noting that they increasingly felt like a racial minority, particularly in urban spaces, that being White made them "too normal" which inhibited their access to educational opportunities and employment being given to people of color to fill diversity quotas, and that being White marked them as an easy target for racial retaliation such as being sued for being racist.

One point of commonality across all of the women's narratives was their agreement that Whiteness is often seen as "normal" or "ordinary" in American society. For instance, both Katie and Corinne used the example of White people being able to comfortably "blend in" within our society with little likelihood of drawing attention to themselves because of their racial identity. They felt that few or no negative stereotypes are immediately attached to Whiteness (though they are often attached to people of color, as well as other subordinated identity markers based on categories of perceived gender, sexuality, and social class). Whiteness is often left unquestioned. Katie offered the example of her own family's experience as case in point. She said:

> [L]ife in the U.S. may be *easier* for [White people]… if there's a majority of people who might be biased or have preconceived ideas…. [O]ur best friends are Chinese, and they haven't visited us yet [at our house in Michigan]. And they

clearly said to me, "We will stand out."... I never really thought of it like that before. So I guess [as White people] we can just *blend* into, just by our physique, we can blend in to Middle America – being White. So I guess that matters. Um – Maybe people treat us – treat us, me, the children – differently because we're White. Maybe if we were Black, walking down the street, going to school, just maybe our everyday function, we may be treated differently.... [W]e would be *different*.... People might be fearful if we weren't White. Or they just wouldn't know what to *do* 'cause we're different. So their reactions may not be so welcoming and comfortable.

When asked directly if she thought that there were benefits to being White, Katie continued this line of thinking by noting that while she felt she could easily blend in when in Michigan or in her home state of Connecticut, for example, she didn't always have that same feeling of comfort in the urban context of Chicago. She said:

> [It's] hard to say [if there are advantages to being White]. I guess just because you kind of blend in to places like Middle America.... [B]ut in an urban environment you may almost be looked at sometimes as... [if] somebody might... resent you or something. Like they think you have it so good. You stand out more in an urban environment than a non-urban environment, but, um, advantages, just, I mean, the only advantage is just kind of not standing out, I guess.

At several points in her narrative, Katie spoke about feeling like a minority in the context of Chicago. Her feelings were not always connected to feeling like a *racial* minority but incorporated a range of identity markers including race, nationality, and religion. Katie identified herself as a White, American-born, Christian Protestant woman, but described herself as being surrounded by increasing numbers of non-White, foreign-born or second- or third-generation immigrant, non-Christian (primarily Jewish) people. And at times she had found the shifting balance unsettling. She said, "[H]onestly, lately, I've felt like a minority in this neighborhood, at [my children's school], and in this city. [Katie laughed.] I'm like embarrassed.... [I]t's just weird. I mean it's like... I feel like *I'm* now the one that people are, um, anti. [Katie laughed.]"

As Katie continued, she expressed other concerns about the ways in which she saw her experience of being White, or being "normal," as a distinct disadvantage, both in her own life and in the lives of her family members. She said:

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And [all this]… goes way back to a few centuries ago where [White people] could vote or something and other people couldn't and then they had to work harder to get to where they are [today]. So now we're the ones that, like, can't get into Yale and [Katie laughed] we can't— I feel like now, it's like, oh god forbid, with the last name Johnson you're going to get into Yale.… 'Cause my brothers, they're exclusion started, sort of, they were like the Caucasian male[s] with the last name of Johnson from Connecticut. There wasn't a chance they were going to get into Ivy League because [they] was just *too* normal. But "normal" is not a good word. But it was too much what [the Ivy League schools] didn't want to get in trouble for having too many of.

Katie felt that being "too normal" – being White – served as a significant roadblock in her brothers' efforts to gain admission to an elite educational institution, because the school was seeking to diversify their population with candidates outside of Katie's definition of the categorization of "normal." Katie also felt that being White served as a disadvantage to others who found themselves in similar situations of being "too normal." Katie saw Whiteness as a disadvantage extending to any context in which Whites and people of color were in competition for employment, admission-based programs, social power, and so on. Explaining her thoughts, she said:

Well right now a disadvantage [to being White] is in, like I said, getting into a college or something. But another disadvantage could be, well, being an employer. If you're a White employer, and then, um, you get sued for something – I mean… I'm not happy when a Black person takes an amendment too far and almost takes advantage of a White employer and sues for a reason that's really not legitimate. So, I think that's a disadvantage – is being an employer and *easily* getting sued. Like, there's enough lawyers out there that'll [Katie chuckled] be able to get the money out of you almost no matter what. And, um, and that's from – I'm trying to think what year that law was put into effect, like 1965 or something.[11] I mean… there should be benefits to it, but there's also abuses to it. So a White employer and a White student may have difficulty, or even a… White applicant who cannot get into somewhere due to the fact that they've overdone their White quote. [Katie laughed.] Where, I mean, that's just, it's too bad. Um. So that would be a disadvantage I guess.

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[11] Katie was referring to affirmative action legislation of the 1960s.

In addition to one's Whiteness making a person undesirable to a school or an employer, Katie also felt that being White put employers in a vulnerable position. To Katie, Whiteness was always a disadvantage in the professional and educational worlds, whether applying, hiring, admitting, or serving in a managerial position. For her, being White worked against White people in our contemporary and increasingly racially diverse society.

In sharp contrast, Terra and Corinne each described being White as an unquestionable and absolute advantage to living in U.S. society. Both women noted, as Katie did, that there are contexts in which race plays an important role in school admissions and employee hiring, but unlike Katie, both explicitly noted this as the result of affirmative action working to right a historical wrong that continues to disadvantage people of color. Corinne said:

> I can't imagine anyone thinking that being White is a disadvantage. I just can't imagine that!… I know that there are scholarships that do apply more to some minorities. And I know that there are times when affirmative action may have [resulted in someone not getting what they wanted].… Maybe you don't get this opportunity, but there will be other opportunities. And, if you should've gotten into this school, then maybe you should've also gotten into some other schools that you applied to, or gotten some other scholarships that you applied to, or – I just don't see that as a disadvantage.

Terra used her own experience with seeking a place for her daughter in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system to demonstrate the growing ideological conflict between understanding Whiteness as an advantage and understanding it as a disadvantage as it plays out in the institutional context of schooling. In the recent past, CPS has used a student's race as one factor in school placement, most specifically in the admissions process for selective admissions schools, which are often the top schools in the city. The stated goal was to increase the diversity of the student body, allowing qualified students access to educational opportunities they may not have received otherwise. Over the years, there had been unrest and pushback about the role of race in the selection process. Community members, often identifying as White and middle-class or above, had expressed frustration that their efforts to provide the best educational opportunities for their own children had been thwarted because they were White and working within a system they felt unfairly privileged people of color. Recent changes in CPS have resulted

in the rejection of race as a valid category by which to consider student placement. Terra spoke in her narrative about this educational shift, saying:

> [T]hey can't use race as a factor anymore [in school admissions] because CPS has gone *so* [far] the other way it was actually a disadvantage to Whites getting into schools. Like, really top schools. And a lot of my friends would get really angry about it and I didn't get angry about it.... I was kinda like, "Oh, that kinda sucks for me, but..." I've had a lot of good things in my life. You know?! [It's] good that some other kid's gettin' it, you know – Like I want what's best for my kid, but I get it. [I understand.] Like, I can deal with it. But some people are very upset about it. You know? But now they've changed it.... They can't use race anymore. And people are really excited about that.

At other points in her narrative, Terra repeated a similar idea; while she wanted to provide the best she could for her own daughter, she didn't want to accomplish her hopes by denying someone else the same. Like Corinne, she was confident that the opportunities available to her daughter were not finite and that she would be able to provide for her daughter without denying others in order to do so.

In explaining her response, Terra drew on two ideas. First, she expressed a belief that our societal context is rampant with racial stereotypes that negatively impact the daily lived experiences and opportunities of people of color. And second, over the course of history the accumulation of disadvantages propagated by unequal, unfair treatment has fostered systemic and institutional inequalities that continue to disadvantage people of color. Giving evidence from her own life, she said:

> [W]hen I walk down the street, people don't grab onto their purse. You know? So that's a privilege, I feel like. [People] aren't threatened by me in person whereas I know I've seen... when young African-American kids walk down the street, people hold their purse a little tighter or look at them a little weird or something whereas I wouldn't get a second look. So, that initial judgment. Even if we're the same age and the same, you know, gender, and the same everything.

She continued later, saying:

> [Being White is] definitely an advantage.... I'm White, so I don't really know [what it's like to be Black] – But I know I never have... those judgments [pause] placed upon me. When I walk. You know?... [Y]ou'd never think for a minute that I was a thief, or something. [But] I don't know, I feel like if you are Black you have

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a little bit of a knock-down – I can't really explain it – from the average world. Or not even just Black but anything [non-White]. I don't know; I can't explain it. I just feel like it's just a long history of things. If you're White, you're kind of given a better situation because of the way the big world works. So then those people are consistently put in better situations, whereas if you're Black you might have to fight a lot harder for those benefits. And you may not get them.

Through her narratives, Terra referred to discriminatory actions propagated by individuals against other individuals, but she also mentioned societal structures working systematically against entire groups of people. She was aware of both the individual and systemic disadvantages of living as a person of color in our society. She was also aware of the role history has played in framing structures that privilege people differently based on their racial identity.

The difference between Katie and Terra's perspectives may be understood in part because of their own upbringings. Katie spent her formative years in almost entirely White, economically privileged contexts in New England, whereas Terra grew up in a predominately Black, economically disadvantaged community on Chicago's Southside. Terra spoke several times about feeling that she saw the world differently than many other people who identify as White and middle-class because of her early (and continuing) experiences within and across racial and economic divides. She spoke, too, about seeing firsthand the ways that both personal and systemic discrimination and prejudice impact the lives of people of color because she had seen the consequences in the lives of her community members, childhood acquaintances, and friends.

Corinne described her upbringing as different from both Katie's and Terra's. She grew up in a predominantly poor, White community in the Appalachian Mountains. Racism was often rather blatant. As example, she said:

I do remember that the assistant principal at my school told my biracial friend that, "He should let his *White* side shine through" when [my friend was] being sort of reprimanded.... Yeah, so, that was *shocking* to me. Like, I was really surprised that someone would say something like that. Um. And I know that my grandparents were very concerned that I don't, you know, um... We had a conversation one time about if I dated someone of another race when I was in high school and, you know, my mom just pretty much said that my grandparents would just die of a heart attack right there.... And then the first time I *ever* remember

race being mentioned at all, I was six years old. I was with my friend. We went to a park, and the mom said, "We can't play here. There are too many" n-words "here." It's the first time I'd ever heard that word. And… I had no idea what she meant. And then I went home and I asked my mom what it meant. But I didn't know. But, you know, I started hearing little bits of that more and more as I was growing up.

Corinne spoke about her struggle to understand these, and other, experiences and the ways in which her own growth, education, geographic movement, and personal interactions with a broadening mix of people helped give her a way to understand the inequality she witnessed. As an adult, her narratives demonstrated an ability to identify both blatant and subtle examples of racial inequality. For example, she said:

> [Because I'm White] I know that I am accepted almost every place I *choose* to go. That people are not going to automatically have an idea about the form of *payment* that I use when I pay at a store. I don't have, you know, that famous phrase "the burden of representation" in the same way. I might as a woman, a little bit. But only when it comes to things that I know that a woman's not supposed to do. But I don't feel like I'm being prejudged all the time [because of my racial identity].

And like Terra, her narratives showed a recognition that history has had consequences for our contemporary social structures and people's everyday lived experiences. In describing a disagreement in which her family members were arguing that White people and people of color have had the same historical opportunities in this country, Corinne said:

> But my older cousins who have argued that "Well, you know, our relatives came over on a boat [too] and, you know, they had to build a [new life]—" And I was like, "They weren't forced." You know, in chains. And then, you know, they can *blend in* pretty well too.

Both Corinne and Terra expressed the belief that as a result of their White racial identities they and the members of their families, including their children, are recipients of both personal and societal advantages and privileges that they did not earn. And both spoke openly about wanting their children to be aware of themselves in the context of others – to be aware of their privilege. Terra said:

We know our daughter's privileged already. Like, in the big scheme of the world, so we don't want to keep her in a bubble, even though she will be in one to some extent because she's growing up in a very good situation. Which isn't a bad thing. I don't want to put her in a bad situation. I've worked hard to get her in a good situation. But in the same sense I want her to understand that not everyone is in the same situation. There's [*sic*] people in better situations, and there're people in way, way worse situations.

Corinne expressed a similar desire to put her children in positive contexts and situations, but augmented the desire that her children be aware of their privilege (racial, gendered, and otherwise) with a supplementary hope that their privilege serve as a place from which to be supporters or agents of positive social change. She said:

I don't want the boys to grow up with a sense of entitlement. I was a rape crisis counselor for three years and… it seemed that so many sexual assaults occurred because men just felt a sense of entitlement about a situation. And then, you know, dealing with other people throughout just life in general, a sense of entitlement is just a dangerous thing and I think it keeps you from relating to other people and it blocks your vision. And that's part of why I'm interested in talking to you about race stuff because I think that people don't even realize the entitlement that they have, and I'm concerned about how to have the boys have knowledge of their privilege without feeling, um… guilty about it. Because I don't know that feeling guilty is going to solve anything, but just to be *aware* that it's there so that it can help to really influence the ways that they see things in a way that we can make things better.

In their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all offered examples of ways in which race contributes to different day-to-day experiences for Whites and for people of color, both in personal and societal ways. Katie felt that the current racial climate, particularly in urban spaces, disadvantages White people, while Corinne and Terra believed that as White people they and their children receive a multitude of unearned privileges. Reflecting and extending some of the attitudes expressed when discussing perspectives and beliefs on parenting in general, Corinne and Terra's general emphasis on wanting their children to develop a relational understanding of self was expressed here as a desire to understand oneself in the context of racially diverse, and thus differently privileged, others. On the other hand, Katie's previous emphasis on

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individualism and developing self-reliant children was shown again in her views on race, in which she saw her children in competition with people of color in the pursuit of personal success.

Understanding one's own racial identity – Who am I? And who am I in relation to others?

Having shared their definitions of race and their general thoughts on what it means to be White in our society, the mothers were also asked to share their thoughts about their own racial identity – its importance (or lack), its impact on their lives, their feelings about it, and so forth. While all of the mothers said that they think about their Whiteness rarely or limitedly, their narratives showed that the more regular interaction a woman had with people of color in her childhood, the more closely she identified racially as White, rather than deferring to an identity marked predominantly by nationality, ethnicity, and/or geographic heritage. In addition, all of the women addressed White perceptions of what constitutes a "good" racial mix in society and described themselves in relation to an implicitly understood definition of Whites as racist. Corinne, Katie, and Terra each resisted aligning herself with the idea of all Whites as racist and made some sort of effort to claim status as a "good" White person and to distance or distinguish herself from "bad" Whites. Even so, the women's awareness of their distancing maneuvers, their reasons for doing so, and their feelings about this practice varied. Some saw being a "good" White person as based upon their actions towards and interactions with people of color while others saw the status as inherited. Some saw the status as permanent while others saw it as a continually striven towards position. And some saw being a "good" White as a self-chosen identifier, while others felt it must be ascribed upon them through the judgment of others, particularly people of color.

The role of childhood roots in the framing of White women's understandings of their own racial identities

All three women made note of their childhood roots when discussing the foundations of how they understood their racial identities. When asked if she thought of being White as an important or unimportant part of her self-identity, Katie talked about a societal and political shift that she'd seen take place in her lifetime and how that change had been reflected in her own understanding of self. She said:

> I guess [being White]'s important.... I think it's becoming less and *less* important! I think when I was a child and growing up it was important. I think I thought about it more [then]– There was like one Black kid [at my school]. And I'm like, "How could he look in the mirror and be different?" I mean – "think that he's not different," or

"Could I really date him, or go to the pro[m]-?" Um, I don't know. But now, gosh, I mean now I barely think about somebody else's, the color of their skin, really.

Katie found comfort in being able to blend into the general population – to not stand out or be marked as different by aspects of her identity. As a young person in the 1960s and 1970s, being White brought Katie comfort because she was seen as like the majority of those around her. During that time, Katie felt that there were clear understandings about the "proper" boundaries between racial groups and she understood that to cross those boundaries would mark her as socially different in a way she found undesirable. And yet, as an adult, Katie said she thought very little about the color of people's skin— her own or others'.

When asked what might have caused or contributed to the decreasing importance of race in her self-identity, Katie said:

> Oh, I had to do it myself…. I had to leave [Connecticut]… As soon as I graduated from college in Ohio, I went to L.A. for two years; I went to Boston for two years; I went to D.C., New York, Newport, Rhode Island, like, back here [to Chicago]. Like, I *had* to go out in the world and figure it out. 'Cause western Connecticut really was… White…. I mean I just felt like "I need to see the world." Like, enough with this, like, small little world. Even though now it seems all pretty picture… I still needed to go explore the world and figure it out. And then now, race is [less important]. I think I just *exposed* myself to the point of really, really getting it. Like, really, really getting into the melting pot of the U.S..

For Katie, spending time living in more racially diverse, urban spaces where she could be exposed to individuals and communities of color contributed to the decreasing importance she placed on race in her self-identity.

When asked direct questions about race, Katie often did not talk about race, however, but rather responded with language and ideas related to nationality and/or immigrant status – identity markers that can be closely tied to one's race but are not the same as one's race. When asked if she had any feelings about being White, Katie's response demonstrated her preference for using identity markers other than race to describe identity. She said:

> I guess the reason I keep thinking deeper [when you ask questions about race] is because Markus is Latvian…. I keep thinking of like the Latvian thing. And, I guess right now I'm just so hyper-sensitive to Jewish, Latvian, Chinese-American, and any,

you know, oh, they're from India... I mean, just [I focus on] nationalities more than

the color of my skin.

It may be that Katie thought rarely about her Whiteness because other identity markers – including those of nationality, ethnicity, and religion – seemed more prominent in her understanding of self and others. It may also be that Katie used other identity and contextual markers to avoid having to talk about race and avoid having to admit that she "sees" race. These would be highly typical manifestations of compliance with a Discourse of color-blindness.

Corinne, too, tended to preference other identity markers when asked about her identity as a White person. While she identified as White and would bring up issues of Whiteness without prompting or insistence, ethnic, cultural, and geographic identifies carried more prominence in her self-identity. She said:

I think more about me being a North Carolinian and being from the mountains [than I think about being White]. And being from a specific cultural thing. And I think more about the boys being, you know, that Robert is a hundred percent Irish. And I think about him being Irish and that being sort of the cultural identity. And so, I think of being from not only the American South, but the Appalachian Mountains which is a separate kind of cultural identity from the South. So, I think about being *that* more than I think about being White.

When asked if she ever received any explicit messages about her racial identity as a young person, the theme of cultural identity continued. She said:

[A]gain, we [talked] mostly about being Highland Scots. Which is, you know, Scots-Irish from– They have the Highland Games, and my dad went and founded our family tartan and all that other kind of stuff. So... [the identity with which I was taught to see myself] was about being a Mountain or Southern White person and having that kind of culture of friendliness and sort of, you know, material culture of quilting and Bluegrass. And the foods that you ate, and the kind of murder ballads you would sing [Corinne laughed], or you know, whatever else.

Like Katie, Corinne felt that she rarely thought about her Whiteness in isolation from other identity markers, primarily because other markers – particularly those of being a Highland Scot, a Southerner, and a Mountain person – carried more relevance in her understanding of self. Both women also noted that their childhood environments were predominantly White, so as young people they had limited interactions with people of

color and racial identity carried little relevance in their personal day-to-day experiences. In addition, particularly as young people, Whiteness was marked as socially "normal" or remained socially unmarked all together. Being White wasn't talked about and it wasn't seen as an issue of particular relevance. As such, thinking of one's self as White was neither automatic, nor integral to one's daily identity.

Terra's childhood context was quite different, however. Having grown up on the Southside of Chicago, she said:

> I grew up in a very diverse neighborhood. I was a [racial] minority. Actually it was more Black than it was White. And I didn't really know, I mean I knew I was White and I knew they were Black, but we didn't really [think about it]— They were still my friends.

She later added:

> I was in a very Black area of the Southside…. [T]here's White areas out there too. I was in a very Black area. So, yeah, people are surprised I know how to double-dutch!… [Terra laughed.] Because I can! Because it's how I grew up. But a lot of White girls don't do that.

As Terra spoke about her racial identity, she made clear that she has always understood and identified herself as White, in large part as a result of growing up in a context in which she was a racial minority and then as a reflection of growing older and moving between White-dominated and Black-dominated spaces. While she said she didn't think about it too much, she saw her racial identity as embedded in who she is, not always because of the importance *she* placed upon it, but because of the importance others placed upon it as well.

The impact of the proximity of people of color for framing White perceptions of race

While they didn't necessarily think about their own racial identity with great frequency, the women recognized that their proximity to people of color early on in life impacted the frequency of opportunities for interaction and the possibility for building relationships with racially diverse others. In the contexts in which they grew up, Corinne and Katie knew very few people of color (and those they did know were Black). Using her own mother as an example, Katie said:

> [I] don't think she has many Black friends. Like, I almost just think that she lives in a sheltered town, and between [living in] Maine and Connecticut, and then when they

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lived here, they were in Deerfield, Illinois. I mean, they just always lived in towns that may not have warranted friendships [with Black people].... I don't think she looks at somebody's skin color and thinks differently really. I just think she always sort of lived in that [racially] homogenous [White] little world.

Before intentionally changing her geography, Katie lived in the same predominantly White context with little interest in or opportunity to engage with people across lines of racial difference.

Terra shared a story in which a college peer came from a background of racial isolation and she compared his experience to her own history of having been isolated within a Christian context that lacked the inclusion of other faith traditions. She said:

I met this guy the first day I went there. I dated him for four years in college.... He goes, "I didn't really have Black kids in my high school." I'm like, "What do you mean there's [*sic*] no Black kids in your high school?!" It was just so *odd* to me. I was just like, I remember that being like a really weird [short pause] conversation.... But on the same token, I didn't know anybody that was Jewish until I went college. Nobody. Like, everyone looked at me like I was crazy. Like, "What do you mean there was [*sic*] no Jewish people?!" I'm like, "I guess they don't live on the Southside. I don't really know! I don't know where they live, but they don't live by me!"

While Terra had always lived in a context with some level of racial diversity, she could understand, to an extent, the racially limited experiences of others because her own experience had lacked religious diversity.

When reflecting on her current context within the racially diverse city of Chicago, Corinne noted her continued feelings of isolation. She said:

[T]here are just whole neighborhoods that are pretty much just White or just, you know, Black or Mexican or Guatemalan or are, you know, Ghanaian and Kenyan and whatever else for that matter. And it's hard to know sometimes how to breech that divide. But I definitely feel like part of another group when it's *so* segregated. When it is just so separate.

For Corinne, despite living in a city populated by a diverse range of people, she felt that segregation was still an issue in contexts of housing, schooling, the gathering of faith communities, and so forth. Just being in a racially diverse context hadn't necessarily made it easier to cross racial boundaries and build relationships across racial lines. In fact, all

three women's experiences and contexts serve as examples of both past and continuing geographic segregation and its implications for cross-race (and cross-religion) interactions.

White perceptions of people of color and finding a "good" mix of racial diversity

In addition, all three of the women spoke directly or indirectly about Whites' perceptions of people of color as a social threat and the population densities at which those feelings often arise. When talking about her own limited engagement with people of color during her youth, Corinne said:

> I didn't have to make a decision about [whether or not to interact with people of color] because I just wasn't surrounded by a lot of African-American people. And, in fact, we had maybe five or six Black kids per class in my school. Maybe ten. And, they were all very high achieving.... [Corinne named several of her childhood peers and their career paths since leaving high school, including being professional athletes, Ph.D. recipients, and so on.] I can remember their names because there were so few of them!... And, there weren't so many [Black people] that White people felt threatened so [White people] were, kind of, like, "Oh, you're unique! We'll be friends because you're not really challenging anything to me."... [T]hey were a small enough number that they were pretty well integrated into the school and there may have been a few racial jokes, but people would never [have] told them in front of those people, and they would've been quick to say that "they're not at *all* like what *I'm* talking about" you know "because those are our friends. Those are our people." Um, and then later when I went on and took a class on the sociology of the South and was hearing about where Jim Crow laws were the strongest, it was where the African-American populations were the largest. So, whenever the [African-American] population got to be twenty percent or above was where... people felt really threatened. [pause] And even now, like, when White people define racially integrated neighborhoods, they'll pick just about twenty percent Black. Whereas Blacks will put it at fifty-fifty.

Terra spoke about a similar awareness that the percentage of people of color impacted whether Whites around them saw them as "cool" or as threatening. When describing her reaction to her college boyfriend's admission that there were no Black students in his high school, she said:

[I asked,] "What do mean there were no Black kids?!" [And he said,] "Well, there was one and everyone knew him. And he, it was like cool to know him, because he was different." You know... at some point it's cool and then, when it becomes half and half, it becomes like a fight almost. It's just very strange.

She explained further, saying:

I've seen a lot of different levels of race *tolerance* because I grew up in such a diverse area.... [W]hen there's a lot of diversity, sometimes, that causes less tolerance in some ways... than it does if there's just a little bit of it. [Terra laughed.] Because I feel like when there's a lot of [diversity], people start to get threatened or they start blaming things on the other person. You know? Whereas sometimes when there's a little bit less of it, people seem a little more tolerant, or they try to be a little bit more tolerant. It's just very strange. A weird observation.

Both Corinne and Terra recognized that in our White dominated society as the percentages and concentrations of people of color grow, it is not uncommon for Whites, individually and/or communally, to feel threatened and for that discomfort to carry negative consequences for social interactions. Terra gave a prime example in her prior discussion about shifts in the Chicago Public Schools' use of race as a factor for school admissions. As White people felt increasingly threatened by the possibility of not getting their children into a good school, they pushed back against what they saw as the cause — too many people of color taking their children's rightful spots.

Similarly, Katie's own narratives can serve as an example of what it can look like when a White person feels a sense of discomfort with the racial makeup of their context. As we've seen, Katie expressed that she has felt like a minority in the city of Chicago, in her neighborhood, and in her children's school community. 2000 U.S. Census data showed that Chicago's overall population was 42% White, 36.8% Black, and 21.4% from other races or from more than one race. In addition, 26.0% of the population self-identified as Hispanic or Latino of any race, and 21.7% of the population was foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Even so, block data showed Katie's neighborhood to be between 75% and 80% White in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), and 2006-2007 school year data showed her children's school to have a student population that was over 82% White.[12] Despite feeling that she was a racial minority, numerically Katie was not. Even so, her context didn't reflect a racial balance that she found comfortable. Perhaps in

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[12] No citation is included here as it would threaten the participant's identity and privacy.

connection to that feeling of imbalance, she foregrounded in her parenting the intention to prepare her children to defend themselves and their beliefs in a world she felt would place them in a disadvantaged position because of their racial identity.

Claiming the identity of a "good" White person

Despite differences in ideas about what constituted a "good" racial balance, Corinne, Katie, and Terra each made efforts to claim the identity status of a "good" White person, working to distance and/or distinguish herself from "bad" Whites – those marked explicitly or implicitly as being racist. Even so, the women's awareness of seeking to claim the status of a "good" White, their reasons for doing so, and their feelings about the practice varied.

In Terra's narrative, for example, she distanced herself from other, more "normal" or mainstream White people. Whether or not this distinction was intentional was unclear. Having grown up embedded in a community populated primarily by people of color, Terra didn't identify directly with socially dominant ideas of Whiteness. Despite her skin color, dominant definitions of Whiteness did not apply or resonate with her lived experiences. As such, she often talked about herself as separate from other Whites. After completing eighth grade in her local, nearly all Black public school in Chicago, she gained admission to a more academically challenging high school. She said:

> I was really into school and I really wanted to go to a[n academically] good school and the public school wasn't touted as the best school, so I went to a private, all girls, Catholic school. Which was a complete 180 from what I was dealing with [in my local, public, co-ed school] and when I went there I felt *really* out of place. Which is very strange because everybody was [White]; [there were] four Black girls in the whole school and I knew all of them. And then there was me. And then everybody else was White.... I never fit into that school. It never – I mean, I loved the academics of it, but I never really quite [fit in].

In describing the racial make-up of the private school, she identified three categories – the Whites, the Blacks, and herself. Racially she was White, but culturally she identified more strongly with the Black students. After two years, Terra left the school and returned to the public schools and a racial mix in which she felt more at home.

Even so, both before and after her time in the private, predominantly White school, Terra dealt with questions of belonging because of the intersection between her

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racial identity and her context. She recalled going to a sleepover at a friend's house, saying:

> I was the only White girl there. And boys came – 'cause boys always come to girls' sleepovers – and they said, "What is that White girl doing here?" And I was like, "Oh! Is this bad? Should I not be here? Is this weird?" Like, I remember that, well, it was a real pivotal moment. Like I was kinda like, "Oh, I'm different. And maybe just– Should I not be here?" I just questioned if I should be there or not.... I mean I always knew that there was Black [and] there was White, but I didn't really think about [friendships with people who weren't White like me as] bad or good or weird or strange or – until after that.

As a younger child, Terra was aware of the racial difference between her and her friends, but it wasn't until she grew a bit older that an awareness of societal ideas about the acceptability of interacting across racial lines came into her understanding. And then questions of belonging joined the conversation, which required Terra, along with her peers, to think about what it meant to be White or Black and what it meant to diverge from the accepted social idea of each category. As a youth, Terra didn't feel that she belonged in a predominantly White context and others felt that she didn't belong in a predominantly Black context. She wove a path between the two, and as an adult reflecting on both the past and the present, she often disassociates from the overarching social idea of what it means to be White, in large part because she sees herself as living Whiteness differently. She was born with White skin, but has culturally lived a life very different from the experiences of many other White people.

Corinne, too, sought to align herself with a definition of Whiteness that differed from the cultural understanding of Whites as socially dominant, oppressive, and racist. She expressed a desire to be seen as resistant to prejudice and in pursuit of living a life reflective of anti-racist ideals and actions. But she also conceded that it was not her choice to claim such a status. She could work towards anti-racist ideals but judgment about her success at living them was not hers to make. Her status as a "good" White person, if achieved at all, would be an identity ascribed to her by others, particularly people of color, based on her behavior. For Corinne, to be a "good" White meant that she must continually prove herself deserving of the label through her acts, not merely because she desired it. In an explanation of that personal struggle, she said:

[T]he one time when I do feel like my Whiteness is an issue is that I do almost immediately want Black people to know that it's like – "I don't wanna judge you."… But that in itself [shows a way I struggle with race]! Like that even shouldn['t]-, like I want my kids not even to have to feel that way. That they would just go up and start talkin' to somebody without feeling worried that the Black person is gonna be like, "Oppressor!" You know. [Corinne chuckled.]

She went on to say:

[It's like] the attack of the White man's burden…. [I] want to know what I can do so that my *children* feel comfortable and also can get away from those [racial] stereotypes. And I think the best way to do that is to be in relationship with people. And that's really I guess where I feel like I could do the most good is just being in relationship with other people. But it's hard to know how to make that happen.

Corinne had a desire to break racial boundaries, to be an example of anti-racism for her children, and to deal with her internal conflict about what it means to be White in a culture where a White identity has often aligned with perpetrating and perpetuating oppression. Like Terra, she understood that her actions in the world have a bearing on her identity as, or in spite of being, a White woman.

Katie, however, saw being a "good" White person as an identity that is embodied and absolute rather than an identity that is continually sought and repeatedly demonstrated. Like Terra, Katie made an effort to dissociate herself from "bad" Whites or Whites she saw as different from herself. When asked if she had any feelings about being White, Katie said:

I'm sort of sorry about our ancestry. I mean I'm sorry [about] how we might have treated the Native Americans that lived here and then the *slaves*… I don't like to affiliate myself with, like, the head of some plantation down in the *South*. I was never Southern, or like – I don't like how as a race… how we may have *treated* others to get to where we are today. Um, or treated people like they weren't the *same*, when, if they were our slaves. That's terrible– I mean I think I'm upset with our history, but moving forward, it's, um, I don't know, I hope to just– If there's anything I can offer because I'm White … [pause] I don't know what [or] how that could be. But if there's any way I could try to mend the differences or fix the relationships, I'd like to be able to do that. (emphasis in original)

Katie expressed remorse over the oppressive history of Whites in the United States and offered herself to the cause of racial healing, but also stated clearly that she did not align herself with Whites who historically perpetrated racism, nor their legacy. Rather, she used her own family's history to demonstrate her allegiance with "good" Whites. She said:

> [M]y grand[father]-, my mom's dad – oh my gosh! He was a leader! He brought the flag of unity to the march for Martin Luther King. In fact, his flag that he designed was in that march. So, I mean I came from that background too, where my mom's dad was a huge, huge advocate for the African-Americans way back in the day.... And he really, really, really, he and Martin Luther King, like, marched together. So, he was huge in starting all that. Yeah. [My mom] has that flag too. So there's a lot of that in my fam[ily]-, maybe I have that deep down in me too. His values.

To Katie, the actions of her ancestors contributed to her understanding of herself as a "good" White person – someone who is on the side of moral good and would not take racist action against others or encourage racist ideas. In some ways, she seemed to understand being a "good" White as an inherited quality – something that you *are* rather than something that you *choose* and work to be. This was made increasingly evident when she described her thoughts surrounding affirmative action legislation and a past legal conflict that had arisen in the workplace between her and a Black woman under her management. She said:

> [I want my kids] To appreciate others for who they are. And not be judgmental. And then, try to just all get along the best you can. But that even goes back to, like, the Civil Rights Act... I mean, sure that was necessary at the time, but right now does every White employer need to be sued because... I mean, that changes peoples' tune, too. I mean – we try to be all [friendly], we try to get to a good place, and then an employer will be like, "Oops. She just sued me," but really she has nothing on me, but because she's African-American and a woman– I mean, this happened to me, so I'm like – I couldn't have been nicer to this woman and I had to go down to the court system to be like, "I swear! Like, she– I, I was nice to her!" You know what I mean? But... she had every right in the world because [of] age, race, and female. You can get so much money from a company. And so that– It's too bad that that's being *abused*.... [S]till, even though that

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happened, I'm like, "Wait, my grandfather had a flag, and the parade, and the
march, so I'm, I'm really kinda good with this. I'm good with this." You know?

When offering evidence of her good intentions towards people of color and interacting
with them, Katie referenced her grandfather and his actions, rather than her own. If
being a "good" White is indeed inherited, this would demonstrate her qualifications, but if
being a "good" White is demonstrated by one's own actions, as Terra and Corinne
perceive it to be, then the actions of one's ancestors have little bearing on one's own
experience of living Whiteness and what that means for one's place in society.

Working to understand one's own racial identity often begs consideration of
questions including "Who am I?," "Who am I in relation to others?," "Who am I like and
who do I associate myself with or disassociate myself from?" As Corinne, Katie, and Terra
have worked to answer these questions, they have claimed or deferred from a White
identity in different ways. They have also described in drastically different ways what it
means to live as a White person – engaging ideas of group ascription and belonging,
racial inheritance, and positionality.

Defining racism – The language we use and what we really mean

Seemingly inseparable from a conversation about race is a discussion of racism – what the word means, what the concept looks like in action, how it can be recognized, and so on. While Corinne, Katie, and Terra all used similar language to define racism, their nuanced explanations demonstrated different understandings in five key areas: the individual and/or institutional nature of racism; the blatant and/or subtle nature of racism; whether racism is to be understood as occurring on an unbounded continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist" or on an absolute binary with distinctions of "racist" and "not racist"; whether or not all people might be at least a little bit racist and why; and the location of racism in time and space.

Racism is both individual and institutional in nature

When defining racism, the women's definitions were fairly straightforward. Terra said, "[Racism is] prejudice based on skin color. Looking at someone and making a judgment without knowing them." Katie said, "[Racism is] judging somebody by the color of their skin, by where they live, by being different than themselves." Similarly to Katie inclusion of a range of identity markers under her umbrella definition of race (including birthplace, religion, socio-economic status, and ancestral heritage), under the label of racism she included several broad qualifiers for which one could be discriminated against. But, like Terra, her definition of racism had to do with judgment based on difference.

Corinne's definition of racism included this idea as well, but also extended it. She said:

> [R]acism is very similar to what race means to me [Corinne laughed] in a lot of ways! Because I think even having race *at all* is a form of racism; it's part and parcel of the same thing. It's people in power who are defining things for people who aren't in power. And, using it against them a lot, a lot, a lot of the time.

What distinguished Corinne's definition of racism from the other definitions was her inclusion of the role of social power and of one group's social dominance over another. In Terra and Katie's definitions, the enactment of racism was an act of judgment taken by an individual or group against another individual or group. In Corinne's definition, the act of racism was one of oppression imposed by those with greater social power upon those with lesser social power. Corinne's definition introduced the important idea that, while acts of racism can be enacted directly between individuals or groups, racism can also take place

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on a larger, systemic level and can be enacted through social frameworks that privilege some and disadvantage others based on race. Corinne's definition could be understood as racial judgment (or prejudice) in collusion with social power, where social power is understood to be privileged access to social, cultural, and economic resources and the ability to make and enact decisions that affect societal functioning.

A definition of racism that includes both personal and institutional racism also makes it possible to broaden one's understanding of what "counts" as a racist act. If racism is understood as an act between individuals, that act is likely to be words or actions that demonstrate prejudice or hatred. All of the women included specific examples of person-to-person acts of racism in their narratives – the mother of Corinne's childhood friend who wouldn't allow them to play in the park because of the presence of too many "niggers;" Terra's friend who crossed the street with her child to avoid a Black man, even though they would need to cross back to reach their destination; and Katie's descriptions of the actions of active members of White supremacist groups near her family's second house in Michigan. But only Corinne and Terra *also* included examples of institutional racism when giving examples of racist acts they had seen or experienced.

Based on her experiences teaching and attending schools in the greater Chicago-land area, Terra, for example, spoke about the structural inequality of schooling experienced by students of color. Naming examples of racism enacted by individuals, she spoke about the racial bias vocalized by White members of various school communities objecting to school integration, rising enrollment of students of color, and anger that students of color were taking seats, resources, and teacher time that should be available to White students. But she *also* spoke about issues of institutional racism in the schooling process, including poor access to good schools, patterns of racial tracking, and school funding that disproportionately had negative consequences for students of color and the poor (who were often, but not always, the same groups of people). While these issues weren't likely to manifest as actions taken by one individual against another, they were examples of societal structures and systems that disadvantaged students of color in the schooling process. They were examples of institutional racism.

Corinne offered another example of institutional racism using the example of her youngest son Joshua and their experiences with healthcare and housing to demonstrate the ways social structures can offer unearned advantages to Whites while depriving people of color of the same privileges. She said:

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When [Joshua] was fifteen months old he tested high for lead.... I did a great deal of research about lead at that point... and [learned that] since [the] time [lead was taken out of gasoline, that] the average IQ has increased by six points for all children, which is unbelievably horrifying.... [Y]ou think that the whole lead issue is over and done with, and then you find out – as we did – that we had lead in our windows and Joshua just loved to go over there and sit by the window and so he was breathing dust and that had this high concentration of lead so... the City of Chicago came in and we did a great deal of really expensive, really time consuming lead abatement on the house. And then we went back and had both boys tested and they had very low lead levels. Although any lead level is not good, the other thing that Joshua [benefited from was that]... he also had good nutrition. Because lead settles in the bone, and if your body needs calcium and it doesn't have calcium it will accept lead instead. And, I looked up the statistics for average lead readings in various neighborhoods in Chicago. And Englewood[13] has an average [lead] level reading of 15, and at 20 you're irreparably damaged.[14] That's an *average* reading of kids who *are getting* health care [and doesn't include the kids that *aren't* getting health care].... This is a *large* population that's being affected by this. And so later, when large scale [intelligence] testing is done and African-American kids test lower... [it matters that] they were exposed to *lead* at high toxic levels when they were young. [But by not understanding the factors contributing to the test results,]... we're just *reinforcing* ideas that people have about Black people that they want to keep bringing around to IQ. Um, which I think is the *most* damaging of the racial and racist, in my mind, assertions – that there's this difference in IQ. But then you just start to see that there are so many things stacked against kids when it comes to nutrition, when it comes to getting the amount of sleep you need before testing the night before. All of these things have such *huge* effect and then to have tests that

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[13] Englewood is a neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side whose population, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, is 98% Black (Institute for Latino Studies, 2005b) with approximately 44% living below the poverty line (Institute for Latino Studies, 2005a).

[14] Lead Safe Illinois is an Illinois-based campaign to eliminate lead poisoning, particularly in children. Specific statistical data about the blood lead levels of children in Chicago communities, include Englewood, are available on their website, *http://www.leadsafeillinois.org/facts/data.asp*. (Site data was accurate as of August 1, 2011.)

then say, "Well, it's the *data* that's showing it. I am not a racist person! But it's just this data!"… So until things like that are also recognized and addressed, then people are gonna get [unfairly disadvantaged].

Corinne's story highlighted some of the complex intersections of healthcare, housing, nutrition, and poverty. While no specific person or group undertook the blatantly racist action of forcing people of color to live amidst toxic levels of lead, institutional frameworks and structures – including the historic legacy and continued practice of housing discrimination and geographic segregation, of discriminatory hiring practices and the underemployment of communities of color, and of limited resources for health education, healthcare, and nutrition – have compiled and contributed to the reality of many people of color in the city of Chicago living amidst toxically high levels of lead. Whether enacted by an individual or by a social structure, the result is the same; disproportionally high numbers of people of color in the city of Chicago are living in toxic environments generally unmatched by the living conditions of their White counterparts. If the same opportunities and resources were equally accessible to all people, regardless of race or class, lead levels would be consistent across all populations. They are not. In addition, when children already punished by the disastrous health effect of lead poisoning (including learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, speech disorders, slowed growth, and brain or nerve damage) are given intelligence testing (which many argue is in and of itself racially biased), the results are used to claim that people of color are intellectually inferior to their better performing White peers, rather than being used to ask what about their context (such as exposure to lead) might have contributed to unequal results.

Institutional racism can seem elusive or hard to pin down because it cannot always be traced to one person's actions or words. But as the stories of both Terra and Corinne demonstrate, there are numerous contexts in our society in which people of color experience social disadvantages that are beyond their control, that they did not cause, and that are not equally experienced by their White counterparts. Close examination often proves these to be examples of institutional racism.

Racism is both blatant and subtle in nature

Connected with an acceptance of racism as being both personal and institutional is an awareness that acts of racism are not always blatant or necessarily intentional. Racism can also be both subtle and unintended. For many White people the word "racism"

conjures the extreme images of hooded Klansman, lynchings, and hate crimes. Other, less blatant acts of racism are much more common among the general public's routine experiences but are also less frequently acknowledged as racism. Everyday racism includes incidents that individually may seem small and innocent but cumulatively have a powerful, negative impact on individuals and on society. Examples include when a White person makes efforts to avoid a person of color on the street or in a gathering, when people of color aren't offered the same customer service as White patrons, stereotypes of people of color in the media, and the belief that mentioning or talking about race makes you racist. On a case by case basis, such events might seem innocuous or perhaps puzzling, but when the same experiences happens repeatedly, enacted by different people, over a growing span of time, the effect isn't so subtle.

Believing that racism is always blatant suggests that one must *do* or say something to have participated in a racist action. For example, when Katie spoke about her legal encounter with the woman of color in her workplace, she said, "But I was nice to her!" And when speaking of her father, she said, "He was not a bigoted guy.... [H]e wouldn't be *mean to* an African-American person or something like that." Her language suggested that, to her, specific words or acts are the identifiable markers of racist action. By not saying or doing something obviously prejudiced or hateful, one is not engaging in racist action.

Corinne saw racism very differently, suggesting that what one does *not* say or do, including one's thoughts, beliefs, and sometimes instincts, can also be manifestations of racism. She discussed the idea that unspoken thoughts and feelings of discomfort can be reflections of racism in need of critical attention, saying:

> I think we're all racist to some degree, 'cause we've grown up with the idea of race and so it's really hard to get away from those internalized ideas. But I'm hoping that there're smaller segments of the population that are willfully and hatefully racist. [Even so,] [y]ou may have strange prejudices that you don't quite understand, like funny feelings of discomfort when you see a group of young Black men, you know.... And those are definitely not benign prejudices, but they're something I *wish* that I didn't have. And there are people who are just like, "Hell yeah, I'm gonna hate who I wanna hate and I have every reason to hate these people and here are my reasons why" and blah-blah-blah. I'm *hoping* that that's a smaller segment of the population from year to year. Um, I think it's a *big*

problem though to address those kinds of [quiet] prejudices that I was just talking about where you have these feelings that you kind of wish that you didn't have but you kind of ignore them because they're not pleasant to talk about, because those [feelings] are related to [prejudices] that have real staying power. And so that's kind of, for me,… that's the next thing to address…. [The quiet kinds of prejudice are persistent] because people don't talk about them – because they're not, like, the "flashy" kind of racism [Corinne laughed], in a way. They're the subtle kind of racism that becomes more difficult to prove when someone comes to apply for a job. Um, it's just a certain level of discomfort.

Corinne shared a bit more on the subject later, saying:

[Racial prejudice is] not just *hate*! Or out-and-out feeling that a person is inferior. It's just that, "Well, I just don't feel comfortable 'cause… I haven't been exposed to you. I know how to talk to these other people and I'm afraid that [with you] I might say something that, you know, [offends you] –" And then we're also led to believe that if we say the slightest [wrong] thing that we're going to get jumped on. Which I think is a little bit misleading. I think people are a little bit more generous than that. I hope. [Corinne chuckled.]… Those are [prejudices] that I think people consider somewhat benign and they don't really talk about them – in part because it's a little embarrassing to admit that you still have those feelings.

In her narratives, Corinne postulated that even emotions and gut responses can be grounded in racist beliefs or stereotypes. And while they are not as malicious or intentional as the use of racial slurs or participation in hate crimes, they still have meaningful consequences for one's behavior and for one's engagement with others. Similar to Corinne's discussion of the importance she placed on questioning her parenting instincts to find and interrogate their roots, here she was advocating the same practice when approaching issues of race and racism. In this situation, her intentions were to acknowledge her feelings of discomfort with racial others, to seek the origin of those feelings, and to honestly question if their core was motivated by racism. Believing that we have all been born into a racist context that privileges White populations, Corinne suggested that identifying and breaking away from racist beliefs and systems is hard, but an important goal for disrupting continued participation in subtle and everyday racist action. As feminist standpoint theory also suggests, Corinne saw intentional and adamant self-reflection as an important component in efforts to dismantle racism.

Racism as a continuum rather than a binary

When contemplating what "counts" as racist action, the women's narratives also addressed the boundaries constituting when a person is or is not "being racist." While likely to agree that persons or groups participating in blatantly racist action are "being racist," the women's classifications of "being racist" and "not being racist" became murkier as the definition of racism was expanded to include subtle and everyday examples of racism. Are you being racist if your friend uses a racial slur and you say nothing decrying its use? Are children being racist when they play Cowboys and Indians and war whoop in imitation of Native characters they've seen in cartoons? Is Corinne being racist when she admits to feelings of discomfort when passing a group of Black men on the street? Corinne, Katie, and Terra's narratives suggest that they would answer these questions differently.

Katie's narratives, for example, suggested that she saw racism as fairly blatant – a specific word or action – and to engage in such an act marked one as "being racist." Similarly, if you refrained from participating in such acts, you were a "good" person free from racist ideas or beliefs. Katie's perspective suggested an understanding of racism that was absolute. To her, a person was either racist, which was bad, or they were not racist, which was good. And a person's status was static. It was a permanent unchanging label. To be seen as racist marked a person as "bad" and without the possibility of redemption. For those who see racism as an absolute, like Katie, the social consequences include a rejection of the possibility that individuals can change over time and include the dismissal of the *degree* to which an act is racist. While all expressions of racism are harmful, destructive, and in need of eradication, not all racist acts are equally damaging.

What Corinne's narratives suggested was an alternate way to view the concept of "being racist." She seemed to view the ascription of "being racist" as a shifting label based on one's actions over time and as attaching primarily to those specific actions or beliefs, rather than to a person's core identity. Seeing racism as a continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist," rather than as an absolute, allows for the identification and marking of race-based prejudices and actions as problematic without confining individuals to an impossible dichotomy in which they must be either not racist and impossibly "good" or racist and permanently "bad." Under a continuum model, racist action can be evaluated on its severity, and the possibility of change over time exists. A person or

group can be understood as never static, but always capable of moving along the continuum, becoming more or less racist. A continuum model offers hope that positive change is always possible and, rather than focusing on who is or is not racist, focuses on a person's capacity to become more or less racist.

Is everyone a little racist?

While the women did not understand race and racism in the same ways, one thing that all three agreed upon was the idea that everyone may be at least a little bit racist. As we saw in her narrative, Corinne believed that we all live in a fundamentally racist context and must work to undo the racist ideas and practices we've learned since birth. In her narrative Katie said, "I wonder if everybody has some sort of racism inside them and it's because of something inherent or something that their parents taught them about themselves." While agreeing that everyone has the potential to participate in racist action, she questioned whether racism is a natural or a learned behavior. Terra, too, wondered if there was an instinctual element to racism. She said, "Race is a way people make judgment.... Innately, people divide one another into categories based on gender, race, the language you speak. I don't know [why]. It's embedded in our DNA." Scientifically, Terra was correct. It is hardwired into human development to categorize and to sort (Allport, 1954; Bronson & Merryman, 2009, p. 52-53; Small, 2001, p. 141), but prejudicial treatment based on category assignments seems to be a learned behavior. I can sort things into categories, but it is not until I imbibe them with meaning that the categories carry positive or negative value. For example, I can sort berries into various categories based on any number of criteria – size, color, taste, and so forth – without much consequence, but when I learn that certain berries are safe to eat and others are poisonous I instill those specific categories with biased meaning; I don't like poisonous berries. Similarly, as a human being I can identify and categorize people by perceived race, but those racial categories are observational until I learn, through imitation or instruction, to apply bias to specific racial groups.

Terra also presented the idea that a person of any race can be racist. She said:

[E]veryone can be racist. I mean, Black people can be racist too. I've seen that too. You know, where you walk in sometimes to a very Black area and people just stop and they look at you like, "What the hell are you doing here?!" kind of thing. So, it's not – I mean, everyone's got issues. All of us do. You know?

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If we apply Terra's original definition of racism – that "[racism is] prejudice based on skin color" – to the idea of who can perpetuate racist action, then Terra is correct; anyone can be racist because all people can have racial prejudices. If, however, we apply Corinne's definition of racism – "people in power… defining things for people who aren't in power" – than people of color, while they can be prejudiced and racially biased, cannot be considered racist because they do not have the social power to implement and sustain racial structures that provide people of color with systemic advantages while denying White people of the same (Tatum, 1997).

Through the narratives of Corinne, Katie, and Terra concerning race and racism, it became clear that understanding race and racism is no easy task. The mothers' nuanced explanations demonstrated differing understandings of the individual and institutional natures of racism, the blatant and subtle manifestations of racism, whether racism is best understood using binary, either/or categories of "racist" and "not racist" or using an unbounded continuum with "more racist" and "less racist" directional markers, and who can or cannot engage in racist action.

Locating racism in time and space

Regardless of their personal beliefs about racism and its complex nature, one thing all of the women agreed upon, without hesitation, was that racism is very much alive and has a very real presence in our nation and in our world. Terra said:

> However you feel as an individual about race – your personal opinion – doesn't matter. Racist jokes still exist. Race matters. Barack Obama was elected and the big deal was about his race, not necessarily his qualifications. They saw that he was a Black man. And I think race is a lot about pride. Like, the [2010] World Cup [in South Africa] now is a lot about pride. Race is a way people make judgment.

Where the women's opinions diverged concerning the modern presence of racism was on its geographic location – *where* racism is physically manifested. Corinne, as we've seen, sited racism in a variety of geographic and conceptual locations, ranging from her childhood in the South to her current Chicago communities and from overarching social structures to her own beliefs and actions. For her, racism was very personal and there were no venues in her life from which race and racism were entirely absent. While racism was played out by different people, groups, and institutions through different avenues

and to different degrees, for Corinne, there was no aspect of life entirely removed from the consequences of racism.

Similarly, Terra named racism in the everyday spaces of all people, including those she regularly encountered in her own job, neighborhood, and family. While she did not name racism as manifest in her own actions, she identified its presence close at hand all around her.

Katie, however, saw racism as somewhat removed from her own daily self and experiences. When asked whether racism still exists in our nation or if we are possibly a post-racial society, as we are sometimes told by the media, she said:

> I think [racism]'s alive and well, unfortunately, in *so* much of the country. I mean it's great that [Obama]'s President and that he's our first African-American President, and that's a good *step*.... But um, [Katie sighed] this country's way too divided. I mean, it's not all L.A., Boston, New York, Chicago. I mean, the pockets of so much of this country are *very* racist and it's so strange!

Having located racism as residing primarily in non-urban settings, Katie continued to discuss and expand her ideas about the geography of racism in the following conversation:

> Kelly: Do you think that racism still exists?
>
> Katie: Yes. Well, in the country.
>
> Kelly: How do you know?
>
> Katie: Well, in the country it still exists because, um, there's [*sic*] barriers. I mean I know because just going to Michigan, they have like confederate flags. Guys have trucks with confederate flags on their license plates and guns, and I don't— There's just like a racism— There's like no *Black* people that live in this town! [Katie laughed.]... I think that one of the biggest problems is this White supremacy group that— I was actually worried about them when Barack was running for President. [In the media t]hey were showing some of these backwoods groups, like, just really, really racist.... [S]o racism definitely exists in this country. And I guess I just know that from media — Even just seeing towns that are, like, *all* White. And neighborhoods that are *all* Black.
>
> Kelly: When I asked whether you think that racism still exists, you said, "in the country." What do you think about in the city of Chicago?

Katie: Well, I guess so, because- I mean right here in this little... community [where I live] [Katie laughed] it doesn't. Because some people are Black. Some people are White. Some people are Indian. Some people are, like... I mean, you name it. We have a lot of different nationalities, and I really don't look differently at anybody like that. But that's just a little pocket. So, I mean, I think that there's still, um, racism in Chicago. I mean, the Southside. The fact that we might be scared to drive down certain streets. That means *we're* scared that they would hurt *us*.... We have fear instilled in us because there's so much violence. So there's racism there, but there's racism up here [on the Northside] if they were to— Yeah, there's still racism in Chicago.

Katie's explanation was complicated because it seemed to present two perhaps contradictory ideas. First, when referencing rural spaces, she suggested that racism was present because people of color were absent and/or because of the lack of geographic integration across racial lines. Her language suggested that without integration, racism is in effect. Second, she suggested that racism is at work when people of color and White people are in close geographic proximity and fear plays a role in their relationship. And the fear she described seemed to be fear imposed upon White people by people of color who instigate violence, create an atmosphere conducive to fear, or otherwise bring violence and fear to geographic areas populated by people who otherwise would not have a problem with race. For Katie, it seemed that the conditions under which racism became a non-issue required people of color to be present and fear caused by people of color to be absent. Living in a community she felt met those criteria, Katie believed her immediate context to be free of racism – both geographically and personally.[15]

While Katie said she would consider some of her childhood friends racist, she also said, "I don't think I have any friends [now] who are racist." Abiding by a dichotomous understanding of racism in which a person either is or is not racist, Katie refrained from casting any of her current friends in a potentially negative light. Corinne, on the other

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[15] It should be noted the probable role of social class in determining Katie's level of fear among various people of color. The people of color living in Katie's housing complex all possessed economic affluence that marked them as upper-middle class or above, whereas the communities and groups Katie specifically mentioned throughout her narratives as having a connection to instilling fear in White people were overwhelmingly poor or working class people of color.

hand, seemed to feel less need to categorize her friends as racist or not. Instead she suggested that everyone has race-related biases, just as Terra had suggested, no one is perfect, and everyone has space to grow, change, and improve.

The women's personal beliefs about race and racism set them up to understand the people and environments around them in quite different ways. As definitions of racism shifted, perceptions about the nature and manifestations of racism, as well as the ascription of "being racist," shifted as well. The women's definitions of race and understanding of racism mattered because they became a lens through which the women engaged in parenting.

The power of hard work to enable success

In the explicit and implicit ways that the mothers described their parenting practices, all expressed a common desire for their children to believe that hard work will enable them to become anyone or anything they choose. The women expressed a range of opinions, however, as to whether hard work is the only factor in determining success or if their children and the children of others actually face limitations or obstacles in reaching their dreams. Whether each woman ascribed to or resisted the idea of universal meritocracy (a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" mentality in which one's successes are based entirely on their own abilities) marked a noteworthy division in the women's perspectives.

Katie

Katie's beliefs were most closely aligned with ideals of meritocracy, believing that, in general, people who put forth the same amount of effort, determination, and hard work are likely to experience the same results in their pursuit of success. When asked if she thought her children could grow up to be whoever or whatever they choose, she replied:

> Yes. Um, gosh, it's just such an amazing world out there right now…. I just don't think anything would hold them back. Because, um… gosh, well, I mean, first, they go to [their highly respected, prestigious school]. And I just feel like that's gonna build them *such* a foundation with all the educational skills. Markus and I, like our, my whole goal now is to just expose them as much as possible.

Katie saw no barriers to the possibilities of her children's futures. And with the added benefit of a top-level education and parents committed to "exposing" them to the world, she felt certain her children were on a positive, barrier-free road to success.

She offered additional support for this perspective when asked in the following conversation whether all children are similarly situated for success:

> Kelly: Do you anticipate any sort of limitations [to your own children's future endeavors]?
>
> Katie: No. I don't know why. I just don't. I feel like those two are just gonna be fine.
>
> Kelly: When you think about other kids in the world, do you think that *all* children have the potential to be whatever?
>
> Katie: Um, yes.

> Kelly: To be anyone?
>
> Katie: Let me just think of what would be holding them back. Like what would be holding them back is, like, negative energy. Negative surroundings, I guess. Um, I mean every kid can't have the dream, but I wonder if, you know, just too much negative energy… is what will kill them. You know, life will bury their dreams. So, I wish every kid could go to [a school like my children's school], I guess, but, um, or just even have the home [life], love from home, or safe grounds. I know, I do worry about the kids that… aren't living in a happy place. And, I guess, you know, it's really because the adult's not in a happy place.

Katie saw no barriers for her own children's futures; she was confident that they have the capacity and the tools to pursue any dream or goal. When asked if all children have the same capability, her immediate response was an affirmation. She revised her reply to suggest that children can only be hindered by negativity in their relationships and environs and that that negativity would be rooted in the negativity of the adults in their lives. Katie didn't offer any concrete examples of how that negativity might be manifested — whether it had tangible consequences or was more of an atmosphere of gloom or despair — but it seems important that she mentioned that "every kid can't live the dream." Such language suggests that some sort of social hierarchy or structure does exist. Where there are successes, there must also be failures. But, for Katie, with the right amount of ambition, effort, and positivity, the world is open for anyone seeking their goals.

Terra

Terra, in contrast, felt less assured that all people have the same opportunities. When describing the potential of her own daughter, she said:

> I really want her to think at this point that she can do anything. 'Cause, I guess she could if she tried. You know? I just don't want her to think she's limited by her [gender], especially [by] being a girl. I think that's her biggest challenge. I mean, she's White. She's not going to have that issue.… We're always trying to elevate her to the level of a boy where she doesn't feel like she's less than, but she's equal to. I think that's really important for girls.

She continued a bit later, saying:

I think [Aralyn can be anything she wants to be], but I think there are realistic limitations.... But in terms of *striving* to be anything she wants to be, of course. You know, you've gotta try.... [But] I think it's really too happy-happy-joy-joy to think "My child could be *anything* they want to be." And I get what people mean by that, but... I believe [that] if she really wants to try anything or do anything, I'll say "Sure." But realistically, she as a person will have some sort of roadblock or society will provide a roadblock for her that may not allow her to do that.... I think it just really depends on the drive of your kid too. But I think there's definitely internal things that've been given, plus the combination of outside factors that navigate what she will be able to do. And I'm realistic about that.

Terra explained that she wanted Aralyn to pursue her goals as if there were no boundaries, but her encouragement was paired with an adult awareness that barriers caused by both internal and external limitations will impact her child. Aralyn, like all children, has a natural potential supported by her DNA and heredity, but external factors also contribute to her engagement in the world. Nature and nurture merge to influence a child's life trajectory and outcomes. And Terra was aware that external factors, including social inequalities, may affect her child.

In her narrative, Terra noted that in our culture men are the socially dominant gender and women and girls can face barriers based upon gender inequality. She had a concern that gender inequalities will impact her daughter's opportunities in the world, and so she and her husband made an effort to instill in their daughter a strong sense of self-worth and the belief that anything open to men should be equally accessible for women. At some point in each of their narratives, all three mothers commented directly on gender inequality and fears about its consequences for their children.

Of note is that Terra did not address only gender when talking about her child's ability to successfully pursue her dreams; she also mentioned race. While she highlighted gender as a possible barrier for her daughter, she noted that race would not erect obstacles to her goals of success because Aralyn is White. Terra recognized being White as the socially privileged race, just as she recognized male as the socially privileged gender. Being of the privileged race, Terra expected no social barriers based on racial identity for her daughter. Even so, she acknowledged that race may place limitations on children who are seen as anything other than White, just as being female may result in

socially-imposed limitations for anyone seen as anything other than male. As Terra said previously:

> [Being White is] definitely an advantage.... If you're White, you're kind of given a better situation because of the way the big world works. So then those people are consistently put in better situations, whereas if you're Black you might have to fight a lot harder for those benefits. And you may not get them.

Corinne

Corinne's narratives expressed a similar belief that ideals of meritocracy ignore social structures of inequality. She, like the other women, wanted her children to believe in the power of hard work to engender success, but she was clear that the same quantity and caliber of hard work does not necessitate the same results for all people. She said:

> I know that there are things about society that make it difficult to achieve anything via hard work [alone]. You know that saying, "If you work hard, you can do anything!" – that's not true. The exceptions sort of prove the rule to that; that there are so few people that can truly work hard and completely pull themselves up out of poverty, or, you know— But, I hope that [my children] know that if they want to achieve something, that if they continue to try and just not give up that failure teaches you something. And that you can just keep trying and keep trying.

From Corinne's perspective, the world is not fair; it does not treat everyone equally and to assume it does ignores the social inequalities already firmly established in our culture. In the above quotation she noted socio-economic class as a category by which society unfairly divides people, but in the following quotation she names other divisors as well. When asked, like the other women, whether she believed her children could be anyone or anything they choose, she said, "I believe my little White boys can. Honestly, they probably can. Their parents are at a [certain] educational level. They're two little White boys." Adding to social divisions marked by economics and social class, she also recognized that her children's race, gender, and level of parental education mark them as socially privileged. She didn't worry that her children's ability to be successful in the world would be limited by social barriers because the world already privileges people marked with the identity traits they carry. But she knew that not all people are equally advantaged.   As illustration, she offered:

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I had a conversation with some relatives of mine who are *extremely* Republican in South Carolina. And... they like to talk all about bootstraps and about workin' hard... and I was like, "You know what? If you fall down and you're White middle class there are lots of other White middle class people to pick you up and be sure you *stay* in the middle class." I said, "You know... when Robert's car conked out, we had no money to buy a new car, but my parents *gave* us their car." I said, "If there's a poor family that *becomes* middle class and their car conks out and they can't really afford a new one, then they can sink right back down into being" you know ["poor"]. It's about who the people are surrounding you.

Privileged in multiple ways, Corinne knew that her family was in no danger of losing their social status or becoming disadvantaged. Existing in a culture whose structures privilege White, middle class people, Corinne knew that even if her family experienced challenges, other family members and friends who were similarly privileged would sustain them. If she, her husband, and/or their children work hard and fumble, they have a safety net of equally privileged White, middle class or above family and friends to support them. Those without the same social privileges of race and economics don't have the same security.

Meritocracy and affirmative action

Corinne, Katie, and Terra were united by a common desire that their children believe in the power of hard work, determination, and perseverance to open up a world of opportunities. They agreed that hard work is a key element in the pursuit of success. What divided the women were their opinions about meritocracy — whether they believed that one's success and achievement was based solely upon one's inherent talents and abilities or whether they believed that larger social structures and inequalities were a contributing factor to one's efforts to reach goals.

One interesting correlation was that the women's beliefs about meritocracy had a strong correspondence with their ideas about affirmative action. Katie, whose narratives supported a meritocratic idea of success, seemed resistant to affirmative action. As we have seen in her accounts, she had concerns about how affirmative action has, according to her, disadvantaged White people in terms of school admissions, job hiring and management, and fair legal enforcement. Referring to affirmative action legislation, she said (as has been noted):

> There wasn't a chance [my brothers] were going to get into Ivy League because [they were] just *too* normal. But "normal" is not a good word. But [being White and economically privileged, they were] too much what [Ivy League schools] didn't want to get in trouble for having too many of.

And later, "[T]he Civil Rights Act… I mean, sure that was necessary at the time, but right now does every White employer need to be sued [as a result]?" Katie felt that achievement should be based solely upon individual hard work and, to her, affirmative action felt like racism against White people.

For Corinne, who understood racism to be prejudice enforced by systems of social power, racism against White people was not possible, as Whites are a privileged social group. Acts against Whites based on racial prejudice do occur, but they are not backed by society-wide systems of power and advantage, and thus cannot be considered racism. Believing that such systems of societal privilege exist and that they actively disadvantage the experiences and opportunities of specific citizens based on identity, Corinne and Terra resisted ideas of meritocracy. Both also supported policies of affirmative action. As their narratives have shown, both felt comfortable with the role that affirmative action plays in trying to counter historical inequalities, even if potentially limiting their own opportunities and those of their children. They were confident that the social privilege afforded them by their skin color, class, and so forth would enable them to successfully meet their goals and that affirmative action was necessary to help afford the same opportunities to all people.

Racial change – What is possible?

In the course of their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all expressed the belief that racism is alive and well in our current society, and each named concrete examples of racism she had witnessed. All of the women also articulated that they did not condone racism or its consequences and dreamt of a world free of racial discrimination. In expressing their beliefs about the potential for positive racial change in the United States, attention focused on four locations: society-wide, in the context of their own lives, in the context of their parenting, and in the lives of adult friends, family, and acquaintances. All of the women agreed that race relations have improved over the course of our nation's history and even over the course of their own lifetimes, and they were optimistic that as time moves forward that racist attitudes and actions will continue to decrease society-wide. When contemplating the possibility for racial change on a more localized or personal level, Corinne, Katie, and Terra considered actions or experiences that could foster change in their own lives, the lives of their children, and the lives of other adults. Each credited her own life experiences and education as having played a part in shaping her racial awareness and beliefs, including intellectual and emotional shifts that led to the abandonment of racially discriminatory beliefs or actions. All of the mothers also believed that as parents they play an important role in fostering their own child(ren)'s development of values and beliefs needed to prevent the perpetuation of racist ideals. Where the women's beliefs differed was in contemplating whether or not adults in general, themselves included, can change their basic beliefs about race. The women also questioned what, if any, role they could or should play as individuals in fostering positive racial change in other adults. Their perspectives bought into question whether individuals' agency is limited to localized change or can impact larger systems and structures of racial inequality.

Racial change is possible and has been happening slowly in society

While all of the women expressed sadness, anger, and/or regret at the past and current levels of racism in our world, our nation, and our city, all were hopeful that continued positive racial change is possible. When asked if she thought change was possible, Terra said, "Yeah, because I think that, I mean, it *has* happened. Things are more tolerant now than they used to be…. [For example,] in the 1950s there'd never [have] be[en] a Black [president]." For all of the women, the 2008 election of Barack

Obama to the presidency of the United States served as an indicator that our society's beliefs about race and racism have shifted over the years. Even so, there was also recognition that social divisions caused by race and racism still exists, that change is slow, and that there is still work to be done before anyone can truthfully claim that racial inequalities no longer exist in our nation.

When Corinne was asked if she thought race relations have changed in the United States in the course of her lifetime, she said:

> Oh yeah. I do. At least in terms of what's discussed [now versus what used to be left unsaid].... [W]hen I was a child... I don't think that Barack Obama could have been elected President then. So, I mean, that in itself is a pretty big change.... Just the visibility of African-Americans is much higher in media. It's still not where it *could* or should be. Um, but, yeah, it hasn't changed as much as you would think. [Corinne chuckled.] Society is *slow*.... Because things get so engrained when you're a child and it's hard to break away from those things. And it can take you a lifetime to do it and by that time it would have been so engraining of the next generation of children, so... It's a slow process and I wish it weren't so slow.

In her narrative, Corinne marked specific examples of societal change, but also identified challenges to that change. From her perspective, we are all born into a racist culture and thus racist ideas and beliefs are the norm, even (and especially) if we are unaware of them. To reject and unlearn racially-biased ideas and beliefs takes time, often many decades, meaning that younger generations are already embedded in racist contexts before older generations have time to dismantle racist structures and support the rooting of new generations in racially equitable ideals. And yet, even with change moving so slowly, Corinne had hope. She said:

> [I] just [have] the hope that each generation gets a little bit more right in terms of that.... [T]his was the first generation that was born, like, post-Civil Rights movement. So, I think just the Civil Rights movement in general, obviously, had a *huge* effect, but it's interesting that it took this long after the Civil Rights movement for us to see something like an African-American President.

Katie, too, noted some of the changes she had seen over her lifetime, focusing primarily on changes she'd seen in partnered relationships and in the workplace. She said:

[Race relations]'ve definitely changed since I was a child…. [T]he fact that the few African-Americans from my high school, for whatever reason they married the White girl[s]. I don't know why— I guess because that's what they grew up with…. [B]ut I don't look at that like [it's bad.] I mean, I guess I don't look at an African-American couple and a White couple as being so unusual, as you might've in the '60s. And *definitely* more teenagers [today], I feel like, are interracial. They do *not* see a difference, where clearly when I was, like, in middle school, you did; you *did* see difference. So, it's like it was pointed out. Um, so I feel, I think the younger generation, I think it's making progress. Each generation in this country, it's getting better. And I mean, a lot of the bigotry is dying out. For *sure*. And a lot of, I mean CEOs aren't all like White men anymore, and things like that. I mean, they're not running the world anymore. Um, as much…. Women are in the workplace just as much as an African-American man. [Katie chuckled.] Um, so [work places]'ve changed a *lot* in my forty-three years. For *sure*.

Katie noted an increased social acceptance of interracial dating, marriage, and life-partnerships, noting specific memories of social responses deemed appropriate in the 1960s and shifting responses today. She believed that the race of one's partner, if different from your own, carries less social stigma today than in the past.[16] And she believed that Blacks and women are taking a more prominent place in business.

While Corinne, Katie, and Terra could each identify positive shifts in race relations, there was a shared belief, particularly strong for Corinne and Terra, that the United States is in no way a "post-racial nation" – a country free of racial inequality. Terra said:

Electing Obama was a *huge* step. But we will *never* be post-race. All through history, from the beginning of humans, people have always looked at each other and said, "You're not like me. Let's fight." I mean, my husband asked, who do you think will get elected President first – a Black man or a White woman, and I always said a White woman. I was wrong. I mean, I'm proud of the United States for getting there, but we aren't united about skin. [Obama]'s still Black…. I think we're getting better. We're getting more race tolerant, but we're never going to be post-race…. I think race tolerance has increased, but I think we will never be

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[16] Consideration of whether or not young people "see" racial difference will be addressed more directly in the upcoming section titled "The intersection of perspectives and beliefs on parenting and on race and racism: Child development and race – Do young children 'see' race or understand racism?"

racism free. It is so embedded in our beliefs. I mean, doesn't Obama have the highest security of any president ever? That's because of race.

Like Corinne, Terra stressed that racism is deeply embedded in our cultural contexts and beliefs. While strides have been made, our nation is not free of racism or its effects.

Corinne agreed, saying, "That's why when people talk about [our culture] being post-racial, I'm like, 'What are you talking about?! Do you know how deep the tendrils [of racism] go and where they go?!'... [Racism]'s just not something that you switch [on and off]!" As such, the women were cautious with their hope for the future of race relations.

Terra said:

I would love to see a place where everyone would just get along. [Terra laughed.] And that's never gonna happen. I think we're headed in a good direction. I don't think [racism] could ever be [back] where it was. I think in some places it's pretty bad still, though....

Racial change in one's own life

Even with their skepticism over the possibility for swift, society-wide change, all of the women believed that change was possible because they had experienced changes or shifts in racial awareness, attitudes, or beliefs in their own lives. Terra was the most uncertain about specific ways in which her ideas had changed, noting that her upbringing instilled in her ideas about the danger and inequality of racism that she valued in primarily the same way today. Her life experiences, thus far, hadn't presented any reasons to unsettle or contradict the beliefs solidified in her youth. Even so, she was sure her beliefs had changed over the years. She said, "I think they always change.... I feel like they've changed, but the core of them... I don't know. [pause] I don't know how they've changed. But I'm sure they have."

Katie and Corinne were more confidently able to name specific experiences or times in their lives that had led to shifts in their thinking about race and racism, and both women noted the important contributions educational experiences and changes in geographic location had played in those shifts. Katie said:

[F]or me to get to where I am [now], I guess it's research. It's education, but it's [also] *making* myself live, like, everywhere. And learn and be exposed to as many people as I can, and not just go[ing] right back into the pocket of Maine [and] Connecticut [where I came from].

For her, at least three specific things impacted a conscious decrease in racially discriminatory attitudes and actions – education, geography, and interaction with racially diverse others. Katie noted throughout her narratives that her upbringing in New England was racially (and economically) isolated. Intentionally choosing to live for several years at a time in urban spaces across the United States (including Los Angeles, Boston, Washington D.C., and New York City) offered Katie both formal and informal opportunities – including interactions with people of color – to identify, question, and reject or revise her ideas about race.

Similarly, Corinne noted how experiences fostered by her time in college supported important changes in her ideas about race. For Corinne, many of her ideas about race were filtered first through the lens of social class. Growing up in a place where social class marked nearly every aspect of her life and the lives of those around her, observations and discussions about class served as an entry point to deepen and expand her racial awareness and understanding. She gave a number of examples from her college years to help explain the process of her change in thinking over time.

> I can't really point to a single moment [that marked a change in my ideas about race and racism]. I think it's been gradual. And, probably I had a lot of awakening when I first went to college because I went to Yale for two years.… In New Haven it was kind of an inner-city, and it was *extremely* different from what I'd grown up with. And so, I suddenly… had experiences with Black people– It's interesting 'cause I had experiences with Black people that were kind of scary, where I had a guy with a crowbar, who was Black, trying to break into my room – And then, um, there was a friend of mine, and she was raped in her room. And she was raped by a Black man who had come in. And there was another time when I was walking down the street with my friend, and a Black man with a cast came up and was asking us for money, and we said, "Sorry, we don't have anything." But he kept, kind of, bothering us and walking down the street. And he had this heavy cast that he was trying to kind of wave in a menacing way. And a man jumped out of his car from the middle of the street and he said, "You leave those women alone! You're giving the brothers a bad name!" And he came up onto the sidewalk and he said, "Ladies, just keep movin'. Keep movin'. Keep movin'." And he just kept that guy away from us, which I thought was really interesting. Um, but New Haven was very much sort of an inner-city location and

Yale just tried to bury its head in the sand about it. And I think *that* – the fact that Yale was just like looking the other way so assiduously – I think that was really kind of the thing that made me think, "What is goin' on here?! This is really weird!" – "There is this *huge* wealth here," and I think because I came from a not-so-wealthy background– I did think I was rich when I was growing up…. But, there was so much poverty around me, where I was growing up that I just thought we were so rich. I had friends who came over, and they grew up in trailer homes and they would come in to our house… and they would say, "Wow, you have a lot of room here." And I would just think, "I guess we're rich then," you know, I really did sort of think that. And so then I got to Yale and I was like, "I'm not rich at all! I'm not even close! This is just *so* far from that…" [and] I did see it as kind of horrible what Yale was doing – *completely* ignoring what was going on around it in the city. And so, I think I thought that people were coming and attacking Yale for a reason…. I don't know *why* I chose that tact rather than another tact…. But… that's where I really felt like I encountered a lot more, sort of, um, extremes in terms of racial and racist attitudes. But also ended up thinking more about it.

Corinne's early college experiences served as a catalyst for raising questions about social realities and inequalities. Having come from the rural environment of the Appalachian Mountains where poverty was often the norm rather than the exception, and moving to the urban context of New Haven, Connecticut where she was a student on financial scholarship at an Ivy League school known for its wealthy, White, Protestant student population, Corinne quickly became aware of economic and racial disparities between the university and the larger community, as well as her own struggles of identity and belonging. She spoke about how she saw behaviors that resonated with her experiences of the material and emotional consequences of poverty, but how in the context of her environment those behaviors were often marked as being the result of race, rather than poverty. And she spoke about her confusion concerning the general lack of attention given to the root causes of broad inequalities suffered by those marked as different by their race and class. Corinne named many other experiences that directly contributed to her awareness of race, racial prejudice, and the enactment of social inequalities – specific interactions with friends of color in which her insensitivities and racially ignorant and biased beliefs were confronted, college courses and professors that challenged and expanded her understanding of history and the struggles of oppressed

populations, and student employment opportunities where she worked as a documenter on topics of cultural and racial understanding and as an ethnographer studying issues of family, race, and violence. These experiences, and others, spread over many years served as change agents in Corinne's own life, building upon one another and impacting her knowledge of and beliefs about herself and those in the world around her.

For Corinne, Katie, and Terra, one of the reasons they believed racial change was possible was because they could see the personal changes they had undergone during the course of their own lifetimes. They believed racial change was possible because it had happened to them. Through their own life experiences and a willingness to change and grow, they saw themselves as living proof that beliefs about race and racism can change in a way that fosters greater tolerance, understanding, and community in the world.

Racial change through parenting

Already confident that they have the power to impact their children's values and beliefs through the process of parenting, the women also believed that parenting had the potential to contribute to racial change in society; what they taught their children would contribute to the foundations upon which they would perpetuate or resist racist ideals. Katie's goal was that her children would not judge others unfairly. She said:

> I just don't want them to be judgmental. And I think that people just have to grow out of [that].... I think in order to *not* be judgmental, that's when you have to really expose yourself, the way I did. And *not* be judgmental. When you're talking to somebody, don't be like, "Ugh. You're not like me." Or you're not like this or you're not like that. You just have to really listen to who that person is. And that takes years. Unless it starts young. [Katie chuckled.]... [I] just really [want my kids to] understand, like, you know, listening. Listening to your friend and where they come from is so interesting.... If we could just keep that level of interest and be genuinely interested and not be judgmental [racism would be less of a problem].

For Katie, being able to openly, honestly hear others' perspectives was a key to tolerance. In her own life, she spoke about intentionally having worked to learn not to judge others, but she believed that children, including her own, have the opportunity to learn such an approach as their first and basic strategy for interacting with others, rather than learning it to replace an older, previously learned, and less tolerant approach. She believed that

starting early could encourage racial tolerance without the lifetime of arduous (and often failed) efforts undertaken by those who choose to resist their learned attitudes of racial intolerance and bigotry.

Corinne agreed that to be most successful and steadfast that values supporting tolerance and anti-racism should be learned early on, but she added that for such values to be adopted and lasting, they must be learned holistically. She said:

> [Values about race have] to be learned in all areas because it's a holistic problem. It's not just something that happens in school or just happens at home or happens [wherever].... It has to be accounted for everywhere. [Corinne laughed.] But I think where it can have the deepest impact is if it's something that happens at home, at least in the beginning. And then as they get older peer groups are gonna be very, very important.

Corinne believed that what parents endeavor to impart to their children at home may not be enough to disrupt racism amid a larger cultural context that reflects conflicting messages about race. She felt that encouraging children to adopt values that resist racism needed to happen in homes, schools, religious communities, and the larger society in order to have the greatest likelihood of being embraced, accepted, and lived. For Corinne, knowing how to enact this broad approach was a challenge. Even if parents successfully modeled and encouraged anti-racist beliefs and practices for their children at home, our larger cultural context rarely espouses the same message. Even so, if children's first beliefs were those of racial tolerance and equality, perhaps it would be possible for them to hold on to those ideas in the face of conflicting value systems. As Corinne suggested:

> [Children] have to see [racial tolerance and anti-racist action] in the homes as well and in other social settings where their *parents* are doing the same kind of interacting [to which they are giving lip service].... [I]t can't be like a forced thing, and by the time they get to school on that level, it is kind of a forced thing. Those patterns of socialization have already been really well established, and... so it has to be something that, I think, starts pretty young and is fairly intentional with parents.

To Corinne, the most challenging obstacle for adults and children trying to support positive racial change was being in authentic community across racial lines. As she discussed throughout her narratives, in her experience, being in relationship with others was a lynchpin for supporting racial equality. Towards that effort, she said:

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I think that having White kids have an understanding of people of different racial backgrounds will help to diminish their own capacity for discrimination. And if that's the only thing that groups of other backgrounds get out of [interacting], that's still a pretty big thing. Um… but I don't know if *they* would necessarily see it that way. That's something that *I* would think. And I think, okay, if we can get [children and young people] to own up to whatever prejudices they have and work on *their* capacity for discrimination, then that's gotta help down the line too…. [A]s the racial makeup of the country changes, it's all gonna be changing, and hopefully for the better. And I think it will. But, part of that is gonna happen from just understanding each other and coming in contact with each other. And knowing that you can be accepted by each other. So that's something that I would like to see happen.

But Corinne found it challenging to find social contexts conducive to sustained, meaningful interaction, especially as a mother looking to model for her children that healthy, positive relationships can cross social boundaries. She said:

I want to be able to talk about race and racism and how bad it is and yet I'm not walkin' the walk in terms of – you know. The biggest thing is that we don't come in contact with each other…. I'm trying to figure out ways that we can be in relationship with people, in community with people – when it's *so* segregated.

In addition, Corinne found it challenging to identify resources to support White people's efforts to successfully parent children around issues of race and racism, especially when she did not have helpful models to draw upon from in her own past experiences. She said:

I never grew up talking about race, except for that "You shouldn't talk about race." And I think that being White does make a big difference that way, because I think that other cultures automatically know that they've got to tell their kids what the score is and help them understand. Because… they're probably seeing things that are troubling, or at the very least weird. So yeah, I do think that [not having a model for talking about race with my children] affects my parenting because I don't have a lot of tools or experience… with having it talked to *me* or discussed with me.

Alternatively, Terra felt very supported by her own upbringing when considering how to raise a child who wouldn't judge others based on race. She said:

I come from an area that... I feel like people just didn't really have tolerance, they didn't really understand, and they didn't know the history and they didn't understand the cultures and they just judged.... [M]y mom is very tolerant and... you know, embraces diversity, so that reflected on me.

As a result, when asked how her beliefs about race play out in her parenting choices, she said, "[My beliefs affect] just every little day things. Every little day things. Like, which are innate to me but wouldn't be innate to some people." Having grown up with a parent who she felt modeled racial tolerance, Terra believed that she had the benefit of having racially tolerant behaviors embedded in her normal conduct, rather than believing that racially tolerant practices were something new she had to learn.

In comparison, Corinne could name specific ways many of her close relatives – including her mother, father, uncle, and grandmother – perpetuated racism both consciously and unconsciously, even if they had made drastic strides in becoming less racist then their parents before them. As such, Corinne described herself as knowing what *not* to do when seeking to raise anti-racist children, but not necessarily knowing what *to* do.

While all of the women were joined in the belief that parenting can be a location from which to support the development of children who are less racist than those in prior generations, they had slightly different parenting goals and a range of strategies by which they hoped to attain those aims. Katie wanted her children not to judge others unfairly, but named no specific strategies by which to foster that goal. Terra wanted her daughter not to engage in racist attitudes or actions and felt that she modeled those ideals through innate behaviors learned from her own upbringing. And Corinne wanted her sons to actively learn and engage anti-racist ideals, but felt somewhat lost as to how to achieve that objective, though she thought fostering and supporting authentic, open relationships with others was a key factor. Even if the women achieved their parenting goals, the outcomes for each family would look different, and yet each would have the potential, in large or small ways, to support positive racial change.

Questioning the possibility of supporting racial change in other adults

While all of the women believed that improved race relations and a decrease in racist beliefs and practices were possible on the personal level of their own lives and in the parenting of their own children, their opinions diverged as to whether adults in general have the capacity to change their beliefs about race and racism and what, if any, role

they as individuals could or should play in fostering or supporting that process with others. Overall, the women felt a sense of agency to make positive change within the confines of their own lives (through self-education, parenting, etc.), but lacked agency or confidence when considering the possibility of shifting larger racial contexts.

Terra, for example, firmly believed that people do not change. She argued that the values at a person's core – developed during his or her youth – remained steadfast throughout their life, unless impacted by some immensely life-changing experience. She described her feelings about adults' capacity to change, saying:

> I'm sure everyone can [change] to some degree. But I think… your core is always there and you kind of go like this a little bit with things. [Terra gestured a swaying back and forth around a median space.] – But you never, like, do this. [Terra gestured a movement entirely away from and unconnected to the original core space.] I always feel like you have that seed [of beliefs] that was planted and you can go a little bit this way or a little bit this way, but I have a feeling that it's just never gonna uproot and take place somewhere else.

She also said, "I don't think people change. People are self-centered. It's hard to get them to see others." And when asked what she says when others express an idea that she believes is based on an incorrect, misguided, or incomplete understanding of race and social inequalities, she said, "I don't say anything. I think people are really guarded about things like that. They have pretty set opinions that they've had since they were raised. I can't say anything to change that. They're defensive."

To Terra, adults are incapable of significant change. The foundational beliefs learned as children from home, school, and society are the foundation for their adult perspectives and cannot be altered. As such, Terra felt no agency to facilitate change in other adults, so she made no effort to do so. She believed that children and young people are still solidifying their core values and so any efforts she directed towards fostering social change around issues of race and racism she focused in these areas, especially on the development of her own daughter and the high school students she teaches.

But even in those contexts, her approach was subtle. She said, "[I]t's not like I change the world when I'm [teaching], but its little, little things that I don't even [recognize], probably I'm not aware of, that I just, kind of, say or do," and "Just, again, working it in with my students. Small things here and there, not like a 'Today we're going to talk about

this [thing called racism]!' You know? [It's] just like always in there somewhere. Not always, but just when I see that… I can get it in there. When it's natural." Just as she believed that her ability to parent in ways that support racial tolerance came from innate strategies absorbed unconsciously as a child from her own mother, she felt similarly about teaching. She was not always aware of the little things she might have said or done that imparted a message about race and racism, but she knew that they were present and had a potential impact on the thinking of the young people with whom she engaged.

And yet, even while she believed that adults' core beliefs and values do not change, Terra still saw value in adults talking about issues of race and racism, saying:

> [Talking lets] you get to understand people a little bit better. You get to hear a different perspective, which is always a learning experience. But it may not necessarily change their opinion [Terra gestured to her heart], but it's still good to hear and get different perspectives on things. I think it causes you to learn as a person. You may not learn from that specific thing, but hearing different perspectives and seeing different viewpoints is only gonna help you learn. [Racial tolerance is] a hard thing to teach. It's a hard thing to learn.

In some ways, Katie's beliefs carried similarities to Terra's. While Katie believed that adults can change their perspectives about issues of race and racism (and she marked herself as an example), she too saw herself as having little or no role in changing the ideas and beliefs of other adults she believed might have racist ideas or engage in racist practices. But unlike Terra, who could identify and name the racist beliefs and actions of those around her, including friends, family, and colleagues, Katie believed that those around her did not have nor practice any racially discriminatory biases; those who perhaps once did were no longer a part of her life. The following conversation demonstrated her perspective:

> Kelly: Do you know how some of your close friends feel about issues of race?
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> Katie: Yeah. Kind of funny. Um. Because close friends right now are so different than close friends from home [in Connecticut]. So, close friends right now, like [our neighbors], are Chinese-American and they're like my *best* friends. So they're *so* open.… They're totally *exposed*. And so I guess that's where I am now. I can talk to somebody, people like them who are totally exposed to the world and have *no* concept of race-, like totally open-minded. Um, I think my best friends from home, and even like my

boyfriend from college and all that, I think they would be pretty much, like, not, they didn't really leave the nest. Like, I think, um, I bet they're not so open-minded. Exposure. Yeah I feel like it's exposure and location [that make people open-minded about race].

Kelly: When you say "exposure," do you mean, like, exposure to different types of people or is it something else that they're being exposed to?

Katie: Um, I guess— Let's see. I feel like [it's exposure to] living. I mean, exposure is where they live and so that would be, like, who they relate to. Who they spend their days with. And then their also mindset where they live too. They may not be so open to new ideas or new nationalities. Mmm. But I think now my close friends are, um, like I don't think I have any friends who are racist.

Kelly: But you think maybe some of the folks that you would have grown up with and [with whom you] were close friends when you were younger, that they would be in that [racist] space?

Katie: Yeah. I think so.

Katie's narrative highlighted a few noteworthy things about her perspective. First, believing that none of her current close friends are racist (reflective of the racist/not racist dichotomy by which she abides), Katie felt no conflict to which she needed respond between her values and those of her friends. Second, she seemed to suggest that the alternative to being racist was to be "totally exposed," which she correlated, perhaps inadvertently, with having no concept of race. For her, being understood as "not racist" seemed to mean that race must have no relevance – a view quite different from both Terra's and Corinne's. While Katie's beliefs about adults' capacity to change differed from Terra's, the end result was similar. Like Terra, she undertook no action to facilitate or support a shift in other adults' thinking, but unlike Terra who thought such action would have no effect, Katie believed that there were no people near her with whom such action was necessary.

In contrast with both women, Corinne felt that adults' beliefs about race and racism *can* change and that she had a potential role to play in that process, both in the context of her own family and in the larger context of her community and nation. But she also experienced uncertainty about the appropriate actions to take against a problem as

complex as racism. She was confident, however, that relationship building was one aspect of the solution. In support of that sentiment, she offered the following example:

> I had friends who went to Israel, and they were on a Mennonite peace mission, and all they did the entire time they were there, their mission was just to have dinners in their home and it would just be dinners between Israelis and Palestinians. And that was it. They weren't doing any other work than inviting people to their house and sharing meals. And, I think that's part of the only way that things are gonna get better – if we could just sit down and be together. Um, and not try to propose solutions for [one] another, but just to be together and know each other. And, if we keep living these segregated lives, and I don't know entirely how to address it, but that's part of why I'm not feeling that living out in [our racially segregated neighborhood] is [the best option], because it's just a little harder [to be with people]. Um, but I think that's probably true of anywhere in Chicago.

Corinne felt thwarted in her hopes of building cross-race relationships in part because of the already-present challenges of geographic segregation. But she was also concerned that once people began to engage meaningfully with one another across racial lines that other issues, including issues of White guilt, would need to be addressed before rich and mutually beneficial relationships could endure. She said:

> I want to be in relationship with people! Because I think until you're in relationship with people then… it's just gonna be all this sort of hypothetical stuff…. I think that a lot of White, liberal, progressive people who would also like to see change are also *worried* about burdening Black people with their need for racial improvement or for enlightenment and stuff. Like, "Oh man, I bet Black people are real tired of trying to talk to White people about race. Or trying to –" you know. But at the same time I think a lot of White people are very hungry for it. And, really feel like they don't exactly know where to start.

Corinne recognized that White people have their own work to do around issues of race and that an important question they must consider is *for whom* they are pursuing racial change. As a White person, is the purpose of seeking racial change to end racism and its many correlated inequalities or is it to alleviate one's own guilt? To explain, she discussed a movie a friend was writing:

> Corinne: [The movie] is about a woman who is trying to come to terms with the fact that her family had owned slaves. You know, generations back. And she

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wants to kind of make reparations somehow. And so she kind of gloms onto this family and she wants to make a formal apology and they're just sort of like, "Do you know how many other White friends we have who want to do that same thing? It's like, 'I'm sorry. I'm booked. We don't have any more time for you to' – you know – Either go find somebody else or go find another... project, because we're [busy]– "

Kelly: Well, it's also that question of, like, what is the purpose of attaching on to a family? Like, is this so that you *feel better*?

Corinne: Yeah. Right. Right. Is it therapy for you because you feel guilty?... [So, what do you do?] [D]o you at least say, "Look. [Corinne sighed.] I'm just going to say right up front, I bear a lot of uncomfortable feelings about race and I don't know what to do about it and I'm trying to seek some answers and some of this might feel to you like I'm just getting some therapy and maybe I am, but [these are my hopes for] what I *want* to have happen." Like if you just admit it instead of, like, being, but I don't know, Kelly, if like – It's just a, um. Because you want to be part of the solution, but *how in the world* can you figure out how to be part of the solution?

Corinne wanted to take action in resistance to racism, but was worried that in the process she would continue to perpetuate racism, inadvertently using people of color for her own benefit or for the alleviation of her guilt. She was conflicted about how to pursue her own racial growth and healing while also serving as an authentic ally with people of color in the battle against racism. She said, "I [can] talk a really good game, but when it comes down to it, I don't know what to *do*."

Unlike Terra and Katie, who believed that taking action to eradicate racism in one's larger context was either unneeded or would have no effect, Corinne sought to actively engage in action, but was uncertain of how to do so most effectively and with the greatest possible positive effect – for herself, her children, communities of color, and her larger context. All three women were united by a sense of agency to make positive changes around issues of race and racism for themselves and in the parenting of their children, but agency to make change on a societal or institutional level was either absent or floundering for all three.

Racial change – Whose job is it to do what?

While Corinne, Katie, and Terra all believed that some degree of racial change was possible, their beliefs differed regarding two key areas – 1) the social relationships they perceived between themselves and non-White others and 2) the social actions they felt would best contribute to a lessening of racism and which social actors they felt were responsible for taking those actions. White women who expressed defensiveness or felt threatened by people of color due to their White racial identity or social circumstances as White people suggested that shifts in the behaviors and actions of two groups – White supremacists and people of color – could lessen racism. Aligning with a Discourse of accountability evasion, these women felt that there was little or nothing they personally needed to do to lessen racism or its impact. Alternatively, White women who explicitly named themselves as having unearned racial privilege in relationship to people of color focused the responsibility for social change on all people but placed responsibility on themselves to make positive changes to their own race-related attitudes and actions, rather than being responsible to change people of color or make changes in the world on behalf of people of color. Even so, they did not always know how to accomplish these goals in their lives or in their parenting.

Previously,[17] we saw that all of the women acknowledged the presence of human diversity in their lives and in the lives of their children, and each expressed the desire that their child(ren) be accepting of all people, including those seen as dissimilar from themselves. We also saw that under the vast umbrella of diversity the women included race as a social marker by which they hoped their children would not discriminate, now or in the future. Terra, for example, said:

> I would love to see [our world] become as racially tolerant as we could... [which would mean] that we [would] kind of have a good understanding of where people come from and not judge solely on what they are. I know that's a very idealistic point of view, but – the slander, the judgment is getting less and less and less with our children.

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[17] See the section titled "Perspectives and Beliefs on Parenting: Acceptance of and comfort with human differences – Who is your child in relation to others?"

In addition, all three women agreed that as parents they serve as important role models for their children and that their words and actions reflect values and beliefs their children are likely to emulate.[18] Terra said:

> Again, I think it's family or experience [that teaches you about race]. What your parents teach you. [What] your parents say in front of you.... Like, my husband grew up in a very different area than I did and he'll say stuff sometimes that are [*sic*] racially not appropriate, you know? [Terra laughed.] He'll say something... out of anger. I'm like, "Don't you *ever* say that around my daughter!" And he says, "I know. I was just mad." Da-da-da. You know. Because she will pick up on every little thing.

All of the women were aware of the role they play in educating and socializing their children around issues of race and racism, and all spoke of their interest in promoting racial tolerance through their parenting. Where the women's thinking differed was in whether they saw themselves as being benefitted or disadvantaged by their White identity[19] and how they talked about the possibility of racial change.

Both Corinne and Terra saw themselves as being recipients of unearned social privilege because of their White racial identity, and each named specific ways that they and their children benefit both personally and systemically by being White. When talking about efforts to end racism, they generally spoke about their own parenting practices and named changes they felt would be valuable if made by White populations or societal changes that would reflect such a shift in beliefs and practices. As example, Terra spoke about prioritizing issues of acceptance and tolerance in her parenting, saying:

> I have a lot of friends who are perfectly fine never interacting with another race. That's not in their [parenting priorities] – Like, if I were to write some of my Parenting 101s, that's really important to me... [I]t's just always in my thought process, but I know a lot my friends are just fine without ever [interacting with people of color] – [They say,] "Well, we're just gonna, you know. It's fine."

Even in the face of friends who prioritized parenting practices she saw as markedly different from her own, Terra spoke about the importance she placed on connecting with and building relationships with people of color because doing so reflected and modeled

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[18] To revisit the details of this statement, see the section titled "Actions and Practices Concerning Parenting."

[19] To revisit the details of this statement, see the section titled "Perspectives and Beliefs on Race and Racism: Being White – A benefit or a disadvantage?"

the values she wanted to pass on to her daughter about acceptance and tolerance across lines of difference. And those were actions she saw as her responsibility, not the responsibility of others, to facilitate.

Similarly, when talking about social issues in which race had become a subject of contention – for example, the relevance of race as a factor in school enrollment and the role of affirmative action in qualifying for employment and education – she repeatedly spoke about the attitudes and practices of some Whites as in need of change or as being reflective of ignorance or a lack of knowledge. While she wasn't always confident that change was possible, she located the need for change primarily in the actions and beliefs of White people and in the social systems that privilege White people over people of color.

Similarly, Corinne saw herself and her children as racially privileged and spoke about the need for racial change to dismantle systems that continue to unfairly privilege Whites. In describing her vision of a racially equitable society she said:

> [W]hen people talk about health care, [for example,] they'll say, "Well these few things tend to be barometers of if a society has a good health care [system]." You know, low infant mortality. Low death at childbirth. High life expectancy. So... I'm kind of thinking of what would be indicators to me [of what]... a racially integrated society would be. And I would say *a lot more* diversity among elected officials. You know, at least proportionate to the populations that they represent. I would say... higher representation across those jobs that tend to be bridges into the middle class or, you know, that tend to be ones that people can access the middle class through.... [A]nd then, you know, if an African-American would win Best Director. [Corinne laughed.] Or if a movie directed by an African-American starring an African-American would be the highest grossing movie in the country or an *Asian*-American or – ... [T]here are so many different groups that are just not represented.... But, um, you know, that *those* things could happen would be indicators to me that we... were able to see people for their abilities and for something about them besides race. And I think that's it – that you have to be able to see people for something besides race, besides that [one] thing.

In envisioning a racially just society, Corinne named possible indicators in the realms of politics, economics, employment, and the arts that would mark the progress of successful efforts to diminish the effects of systemic and personal racism. In doing so, she recognized

that racism crosses all spheres of daily life and that true equality will not be reached until representation is more racially reflective in all fields.

In the context of her own parenting, Corinne located the burden of racial change primarily on herself and other Whites, citing the need to recognize and dismantle racial biases and to work in community with others to build socially equitable conditions for all people. She, like Terra, was not saying that people of color have no role to play in dismantling racism, but that as a White person her focus needed to be on doing work to change herself and the inequitable systems from which she benefits rather than on doing racial justice work *for* people of color. This perspective was reflected in her narratives talking through the actions she had undertaken or sought to undertake in resistance to racism and racist structures in her own life and in her parenting. She focused on identifying the ways her beliefs and actions continued to perpetuate racism and how she could make changes in that local, personal space. She also concentrated on how to advocate for and support changes in larger social structures that advantage her unfairly based on her racial identity. And she deliberately focused on sharing those lessons, her own struggles to overcome racial bias, and examples and patterns of inequality and change throughout history with her children in age appropriate ways, seeking to offer a roadmap towards the values of racial justice and equality in their lives as well as her own.

Katie's narratives offered a perspective distinctly different from both Terra's and Corinne's. As we have seen, Katie saw herself and her family as being disadvantaged because of their skin color. In her eyes, they faced challenges in educational admission, employment, and potential legal action because they represented the White majority in a time focused on elevating minority groups. In her parenting, Katie spoke to the importance of preparing her children to be confident in their own identities and to stand up for themselves in the face of confrontation. Her perspective seemed reflective of a perceived conflict or competition between people based on racial differences. Whereas Corinne and Terra's attitudes seemed to reflect an abundance model, in which people of color could be successful *without* depleting or depriving Whites of similar successes, opportunities, or resources, Katie seemed to filter her attitudes through a scarcity model in which different races were locked in struggle over finite resources. That foundational difference could explain the dissimilarity in her parenting approach when compared to the other women.

But also of note was the way Katie seemed to locate racism in the actions and beliefs of others, but not herself, her friends, or her peers. As such, she marked the need for *others* to change in order for racism to decrease. When she did name actions that could be undertaken by Whites, she named ways that they could help people of color, never mentioning any potential changes to their own attitudes or practices. This may have been related to Katie's perception of racism as a dichotomy. Those she marked as racist were "scary" and "close-minded," and she found herself unable to relate to their beliefs and actions. It may have been that she saw no need for attitudinal change among typical, "not racist" Whites because by the very nature of being "not racist" she saw them as making no negative contributions to racism. As such, she located the need for change among two groups – White supremacists and populations of color. She said, for example:

> [W]e really have to fix, like— Well, there're two areas. There're [the] really rural White supremacy attitude that's *so* dangerous. For whatever reason, they have *their* issues. And then… the ghettos that are just so scary and dangerous that… the most money they can make is selling drugs or having gangs. I mean, just the fact that their life is so meaningless that they would actually, like, shoot someone else to be in the right gang. Or… I mean, somehow we just need, yeah, somehow we need to clean up those neighborhoods. With [Katie laughed], um, more educa[tion]-, I don't know, yeah. Gosh. More exposure. More self-worth.

Talking more directly to the process of parenting around issues of race and racism and parenting in pursuit of positive racial change, Katie said:

> And it's so sad that— How can someone *my* age still be passing down to their kids that there're [*sic*] some reason they should feel like a Black person isn't — what? — as smart, or entitled as they are? Or should have the same opportunities? I just think that's where it comes from. It definitely comes from that individual's parents. Each individual's parents. And, I mean, I know that on the Southside of Chicago and, um, there's not as much *opportunity*. That so many women have, like, thirteen babies. I mean there's like too bad that we can't fix some of those communities to help them *succeed*, I guess, in the world. Succeed by, by, by not having to use guns and gangs and violence and, and be so in despair. 'Kay. I wish they had an easier way *out*. But I think it might start from— Where would that start from?… First you have to start with, with like a, um, a couple actually getting married before having children [Katie laughed] or something! I mean, that really just, uh,

racism – a lot of it comes because when, somebody will turn the news on and all that you see is death and murders in the Southside of Chicago. And you just get angry. But then, but that's such an overwhelming task to fix those communities. I guess just so much of the killing comes from the, the ghetto. And you just wonder how to, how to get everybody in *sync*. With opportunity…. [Opportunity] would look like… even the darkest communities – "darkest" meaning, like, communities where there are bars on the windows and shootings on the streets – to actually have flourishing businesses and children who go to schools, and, I mean go to school everyday because they actually *do* plan to go to college and they *do* have, they wanna have their dream come true. I guess that would also, it would look like, a mom who… or maybe more of a *male* role model in their life too? Maybe more male role models? Uh, eh, I just picture this, the streets that I'm picturing have like so many women having so many children and really not any kind of male model, which just mean, I don't know, like maybe they crave a little more, um, I don't know. Not like a woman can't raise a child, but… just more respect or something. For life. [pause] More respect for life and then they wouldn't, um –

In her narrative, Katie located the need for change as being within White supremacist groups and more directly within communities of color, and the list of changes she felt would contribute to "fixing" the communities was long. To lessen racism, she suggested that people of color needed more education, more exposure (to an unnamed something), more respect, and more self-worth. They also needed less involvement with drugs, gangs, guns, and violence. And they needed to have more children born into the context of marriage, more male role models, fewer single mothers, fewer children total, and more children with a desire to achieve an education and their dreams. Without saying so directly, Katie blamed racism on people of color, suggesting that if their lives looked different that White people wouldn't get so angry and the world would treat them better. She also failed to question what circumstances might contribute to the contexts she described (a description teemed with race- and class-based stereotypes, reflective of her own biases about what "good" families look like and ignorance surrounding the environmental, psychological, and a sociological realities of both poverty and systemic racism). Katie's suggestions reflected a paternalistic plan to "fix" others without considering that those she wanted to "fix" know their own situation most personally and most completely and might have ideas about how *they* would like their contexts changed,

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as well as what help they might want in that effort, if any. Also, Katie's suggestions included no self-reflection about how changing her own attitudes or practices might impact the situation. Focusing the need for change on others relieved Katie and other "good Whites" from any burden of responsibility, guilt, or change.

Obviously, the ways in which these three White women understood themselves and their place in relationship to racial others had a connection to the ways they understood their own role in participating in potentially positive racial change. Those who saw themselves in community with people of color also tended to see themselves as personally responsible for fostering positive racial change by engaging, as feminist standpoint theory suggests, in diligent and enduring self-reflection paired with intentional action to break patterns of White supremacy, rather than allow it to perpetuate. Alternatively, White women who saw themselves in competition with or in opposition to people of color saw themselves as having very little or no role in positive racial change because they were ignorant to the ways in which they were contributing to racism or benefiting unfairly from its tenants. They instead placed the burden of change on White racist extremists and people of color.

THE INTERSECTION OF PERSPECTIVES AND BELIEFS ON PARENTING AND ON RACE AND RACISM

A critical characteristic of effective parenting (as well as educating, socializing, and learning in general) is the way in which parenting decisions are informed by and integrated with knowledge of child development. When considering the relationship between their perspectives and beliefs on parenting and their perspectives and beliefs on race and racism, Corinne, Katie, and Terra focused on two key areas of understanding. First, they described their beliefs concerning the intersection of child development and race, considering questions such as "Do children 'see' racial differences?" and "Do children see or understand racism? At what ages?" And second, they questioned children's status as participatory racial beings (or not) in our racialized world.

Most parents, included those enrolled in this study, are united by a desire to do what is best for their children. And yet, conceptions of what is "best" become murky and contentious when parties — whether families, cultures, political systems, or so forth — disagree about what is developmentally appropriate or in the best interests of children. When striving to do what is "best," what might be an obvious response for one parent might be entirely counter-intuitive to another. Parenting around issues of race and racism is one such context in which parental disputes arise when attempting to identify parental strategies that are truly in the best interests of children's healthy growth and development. Knowing more about adults' beliefs about child development and age appropriate behaviors and expectations as related to race and racism can offer insight for understanding the reasoning behind the parenting choices adults make.

Child development and race – Do young children "see" race or understand racism?

While Corinne, Katie, and Terra all agreed that children eventually become aware of race and racism, they disagreed about how such an awareness is developed (whether through explicit conversation, learning history, personal engagement in the world, observation, or other means), and they disagreed about the age that such an awareness first begins to develop (ranging from as early as three years of age to as late as the teenage years). Understandably, the women's thoughts also differed as to whether or not they thought their own children were aware of and/or contributed to the mistreatment or unequal treatment of others based on race. In other words, they disagreed on whether or not their own children were capable of participating in discriminatory or racist action, or had done so already. For some of the women, their beliefs about how children learn about race and racism mirrored their beliefs about how children learn in general. For others, there was disjuncture between the perceived modes of learning in the two areas. And for all of the women, their beliefs seemed to have a relationship with their understanding of the intersection between child development and race.

Katie

Katie's narratives provided perhaps the most complicated set of beliefs about her children's relationship to an awareness or understanding of race and racism. When asked if she thought that her children, at their current ages of four and six years old, had any recognition of racial differences, she said, "Well, no.... I don't think right now, like, if they had a[n] African-American friend or a White friend – I feel like they wouldn't really get it. Sense a difference. I don't think so yet." When asked about the age at which she thought young people *do* become aware of racial differences, she said, "[I]t's like maybe seventh grade. I feel like seventh grade is when we used to make fun of people, and that's when kids get really *rough* around the edges, but up until then, everyone's sort of the same." But, she continued on to say that she was uncertain if racial awareness developed as early as the middle school years. As we saw earlier, she said, "*[D]efinitely* more teenagers [today]… do *not* see a difference, where clearly when I was in middle school, you did; you *did* see difference." As such, Katie believed that even some teenagers are unaware of racial differences.

Two things seemed of particular note concerning Katie's statements. First, she seemed to perceive an awareness of racial differences as undesirable, believing instead

that *not* "seeing" race is a positive attribute. Second, she seemed to correlate the recognition of racial differences with the mistreatment, bullying, or ostracism of others in connection to those differences. For her, the recognition of racial diversity was confluent with the practice of bias and discrimination. And she seemed to believe that the longer one sees everyone as the same, rather than noticing differences, the less likely one is to engage in racist action.

When discussing her intention to expose her children to as much human diversity as possible, Katie was asked why she placed such a high value on immersing her children in a sea of human difference, especially if she believed that they didn't see or notice the diversity. She said:

> I think that [being exposed to so much diversity is important because] they're just gonna *not see it*. I don't think they see a difference in a person by the color of their skin or their national[ity]. I mean I think what's good about it is that they're not gonna be judgmental. They're gonna be *so* open-minded and so used to [diversity]— like their *norm*, their definition of "normal" is to have ten kids in a room and maybe one other White kid. Or two other White kids. I mean, their definition of normal is really, really international. I don't think they think [our neighbor]'s from India— ... [E]very morning we pick up [our neighbor and take him to school]. I don't think they're like, "You're from India. Like, you have a little darker skin or different hair. Or, your mother sometimes has a sari on her head."... I think that that's all *normal* to them — which is so great. Because that'll give them a balance in the world, especially now that the world's getting more and more integrated. In the business world, it's more and more integrated. And in life in gen[eral].... Because we are becoming more... of *one* in the workplace.

To Katie, exposure to a wide variety of people helped make diversity, rather than homogeneity, the social norm for her children, and she alluded to the idea that if diversity is understood as "normal" that it becomes unseen. In Katie's thinking, if everyone is different, then difference becomes normal and thus invisible and powerless to cause social conflict. Her children won't "see" what doesn't matter, and if diversity is normal, then it no longer matters. If individuals or groups are not singled out as the result of their differences, then her children would have no target for judgment or bias. Understanding that Katie equated "seeing" human differences with being racist or taking racist action, she believed it beneficial to engage her children in a context in which diversity became so

commonplace that difference became invisible. As she continued her narrative, she restated the belief that comfort with such diversity will be beneficial to her children both personally and professionally in our increasingly globalized world.

What was troubling about Katie's approach was that it continued to reflect her conviction that racism is only exercised individually, not systemically or institutionally. Her thinking ignored the possibility of bias, discrimination, or racism on any level other than personal because she assumed that if individuals no longer engaged in racist attitude or action that racism would no longer exist.

What was additionally troubling about Katie's narratives was her continued conviction that her children do not see human differences, despite providing numerous examples from recent experiences suggesting that they do. For example, she said:

> [Y]esterday Nella and I were walking down the street and she saw an African-American man and said, "He looks like a Barack Obama." And so, to her, I said, "Oh, okay."… [And our neighbors] – they're both Chinese. They're [Nella and Ian's] best friends. They come over every day. I do not think that [my kids] *ever* even saw a difference – and still don't. But when we were watching the Olympics… they said, "Who would they be rooting for – China or U.S.?" You know, things like that.… [But], I don't think they're really seeing somebody by the color of their skin at all.

Katie flatly denied her children's awareness of racial differences, even though her daughter explicitly pointed out a Black man (using the language available to her) and both of her children asked direct questions about their friends' national loyalties in competitive sports. This seemed even greater indication that Katie equated "seeing" differences as equivalent to being judgmental, prejudice, or racist. She seemed to believe that to acknowledge children's observations or questions as race- or nationality-based would be to mark the children themselves as "being racist," of which she believed her children were incapable.

And yet, to further complicate Katie's perspective, she did believe that children, including her own, were observant of cultural differences between individuals and groups, and she viewed this recognition as both acceptable and beneficial. She said:

> [I want my kids to] just appreciate their culture. I mean, we can certainly appreciate… every holiday.… [P]eople have different holidays. People have different religions. People have different ancestry and beliefs or different

countries that they're from. And [we can] just really appreciate where that other person's coming from.... I think [my kids]'re pretty aware already of different cultures. And different languages. So I think it's okay now. As long as they're not going to be bigoted about it, or feel like one's better than the other.

Katie was comfortable with her children's awareness of cultural diversity when marked by differences in religion, celebrations, languages, and national ancestry, but not their awareness of race or racism. What united both beliefs was a concern that bias and judgment not enter into her children's awareness of difference. But while Katie seemed to believe it possible to identify cultural differences without making judgment on whom or what was "right" or "wrong" or "better" or "worse," she didn't appear to hold the same conviction when it came to the observation of race. She seemed to feel that children are incapable of "seeing" race without constructing a hierarchy of preference. Thus she didn't believe that her children could notice racial differences nor that they could participate in racialized judgment or action.

Katie said:

I don't think [my kids]'re really seeing somebody by the color of their skin at all.... [I]f any bigotry is coming from home that would be a problem.... [I]t's taught from home if [kids] have any kind of problem with um, or you know, if they're... prejudiced. That makes me really sad. Because that's coming from someone who's not happy with themselves, or — or [are] insecure. But I don't think [kids see differences].

In reasserting that her children do not see race, Katie suggested that prejudice is learned and is derived from insecurities or the lack of confidence. Believing that no such models of bigotry or insecurity were present in their household, Katie maintained that her children do not see difference and have no source from which to learn or practice biased attitudes or actions.

Believing that race and racism are learned, Katie was asked to share her thoughts about when and how that process takes place in the lives of young people. The following dialogue relays some of that conversation:

Kelly: [D]o you think that there is value or importance in people talking about race?

Katie: I guess it depends on the age. Um, and it is valuable because, yes, it's important to talk about where they might have come from.... [I]t's good to

learn the heritage, I guess, because then you appreciate cultures. Um, so in that way, it's good to learn different languages and different countries and understand how the world is, how the world works. So that's why — the history. Understanding the history of it all.

Kelly: You said that it's important to talk about race, but depending on the age. How do you make judgments about age?

Katie: You know, I don't know.... I mean I know that Ian last year in [Kindergarten] learned a lot about Martin Luther King and was quoting to me, like, "He got shot, Mommy." And, so, okay, so he was five. I mean, I'm not even judging whether that was right or wrong... [but] it was breaking my heart that they were learning the history — which they need to learn but... boy, you know, the human race is a tough, tough breed. Um, but um, so I don't know what age.... I mean what year do they start learning about maybe even American history? Then they'll really kinda catch on more to race. But right now, I don't think they're looking at other kids in their classes any different than themselves. And I don't think they *ever* should really. I just, once they read history, then they're gonna under[stand]–, know more about... what happened in this country to get where we are today. What a battle it was.

Katie placed the location for learning about race and racism in explicit history lessons taught by teachers in the specific context of schooling. While she stated the importance of understanding one's own roots and the racial journey of the nation in which we live, there was no mention that race might be learned in the process of daily life nor from social agents other than classroom teachers. As her narrative continued, Katie made clear that while she believed that her children should learn history, she saw no role for herself in intentionally addressing issues of race and racism with her children, with the possible exception being if they brought it up first. In discussing her children's learning of our nation's racial history, she said:

Yeah, you definitely need to know your history, the history. It's just sad that they're gonna know it. But, yeah, they, oh, they definitely need to know history. It helps us know how we got here today.... We can't shelter them. They need to know history. But whether or not, like, I need to sit Nella down now and explain, like, "I'm White and that person—" You know, no... I don't feel the need to do

that right now.... I mean they're four and six. I don't really feel like pointing out differences. Um, I mean, I think we can appreciate differences.... We can... teach them to appreciate differences. I think that's what needs to be done.... But I don't think we need to point out differences right now – ... I would never point out to – ... I mean, I can't believe Ian's almost seven. He's spent every day with [our Chinese-American neighbors] and I've never pointed out that they're Chinese-American. Ever. And they never even looked at, like, anything– They don't think anything of it. So I think that's good. I think that's better. I couldn't imagine being like, "Ohh! Your friends are Chinese!" Or "Do you notice the difference – like your hair" or – It doesn't make any sense. No, I don't think so. Not at this age.

Katie's narrative seemed to reflect an assumption that children only "see" differences if they are pointed out explicitly. Otherwise, they fail to notice them or think nothing of them if they do. There also seemed to be the belief that to intentionally engage children in adult-led conversation about human difference would be detrimental in that it would point out differences children do not see, think about, or place value upon otherwise. Katie's stance seemed to be one of "If I don't bring it up and don't say anything, race and racism will continue to be non-issues for my children."

Terra

When considering the intersection between child development and race, Terra, unlike Katie, believed that children *are* capable of "seeing" race – of observing physical differences between people, particularly skin color. But, like Katie, Terra did not believe that her daughter could see racism at work in the world around her, nor was capable of participating in racist practice at such a young age.

As a result of conversations with her own five-year-old daughter, Terra came to realize that children are capable of recognizing racial differences. The following conversation describes one such moment of realization.

> Terra: [At our house] we never talk about skin color. I make a point of not bringing it up. [But,] there're people of different colors in my daughter's preschool class. Mostly White. We're in a mostly White neighborhood. A few Hispanic kids, one Black kid. And my daughter's friends with [the Black girl], and she was telling me something about her friend at school and I

asked which one and she said, "The one with the brown skin." And I kinda went, "Oh."

Kelly: You were surprised?

Terra: Yeah, but I don't know why I should be. When I'm wearing a pink shirt she can say so, so why not skin? Kids differentiate people in different ways, and she made an observation about what she saw. And that's okay. So, she can see differences in the colors of peoples' skin, but I don't think she knows anything about racial issues.

Like Katie, Terra made the parenting choice not to intentionally mention or bring up racial differences when in conversation with her daughter. But, unlike Katie, it made sense to Terra that Aralyn could identify differences in skin color, just as she was able to identify color differences in other contexts. Terra said, "I didn't know [that kids noticed racial differences], until my daughter. Kids understand color; why wouldn't she notice?! But I don't think she's aware of race issues. But she sees the world."

While Terra knew that Aralyn could identify differences in skin color, she remained fairly certain that she was too young to see or understand manifestations of racism or to take note of race-based discrimination or inequalities. The following conversation offers insight into her perspective:

Kelly: What do you think your daughter *understands* about racial differences, both in terms of race and/or whether you think she understands racism at all?

Terra: I don't know. Yeah. I don't think she understands [pause] racism. I don't know, though. Um. I don't think she understands if I said, "What race is he?" She would be like, "What do you mean?" Like, I don't think she is familiar with the term. I think she understands that, like I said, she has this skin color, [but this other person] has that skin color, whatever that situation is…. [That's j]ust straight up observation.

Kelly: Do you think that there are ways that she *sees* race being lived or acted out?

Terra: I don't think so. But I could be wrong. I don't think she could pick up on that…. I mean, like I said, one of her best little friends is Black at school. Being raised by a White family. And she never asked a question about that. She just says — I asked her which one was her one day and she goes,

"The one with the dark skin." And that's all she said.... So I think she's definitely more aware of gender at this age than she is of race. But, there, again, in her school, even though it's a CPS school, this area is very White. So, even though there's diversity, it's not *that* diverse. The younger grades are pretty White.

While Terra knew that her daughter could accurately observe differences in skin color, Aralyn hadn't asked any questions or acted in such a way that made Terra believe she had any awareness of the ways race is experienced in real lives such that biased judgments are made or inequalities are experienced. Terra did not dismiss the possibility that children Aralyn's age might notice racial inequalities, but she had seen no evidence to support the idea that Aralyn had such an awareness in her own life. Terra did seem to wonder, however, whether a greater level of racial diversity in Aralyn's environment would change the degree of attention she gave to race.

Like Katie, Terra believed that race and racism are learned, but when contemplating the development of that awareness and knowledge, Terra was at a bit of an impasse. The following exchange demonstrates her thinking on that process.

> Terra: I don't think people learn [directly] about race. Like, your parents don't sit you down and say, "Okay. Well, today we're going to have the Race Talk." [Terra chuckled.]... [Y]ou learn about it through time and conversations growing up. Kids know. Like I said... my daughter now recognizes difference in skin color. That's just a complete observation. It's not "This is better than that." It's just, "This is," you know, "This is purple and this is white. This is Black and this is White." And I have dark skin and she has light skin. It's an observation.

> Kelly: [A]t some point there's also a place where some people start to put judgment on [racial differences]. Where does that come from?

> Terra: I have no idea. I think it comes from — It could come from how you were raised. It could come from outside portrayals of things. Um, it can come from real life experience. Like, if you have one bad experience with someone who's a different race, you judge that whole race then forever and ever. I don't know. Everyone's different. I have no idea.

Terra believed that knowledge of race is learned through the process of daily life and not likely through explicit conversation. Children learn to recognize racial differences

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because the physical markers are right before their eyes. But, Terra saw the development of an awareness of racism as a greater mystery with no specific or guaranteed impetus or trigger.

When asked if she thought there was ever a point at which children should be given explicit messages about race, racism, or race relations, she said, "I don't think so. There's really no reason, unless it was some historical lesson. 'This is what happened long ago,' kind of thing." Like Katie, Terra suggested that the time and place to talk directly about race was in the context of history, as learned most likely in a classroom setting. And, like Katie, she felt that having her daughter learn about the history of race in the United States, particularly how things have changed over time, was important. She said:

> I would love for [Aralyn] to know… a little bit of the history of things. Why people fight for things, and, you know, how things came to be. I mean, it's important for her to understand, like, how things were in the 1950s…. All those things are part of our history so she should know about it.

When continuing to contemplate whether there could be value in children talking explicitly about race, Terra further expanded her answer, saying:

> I think it would be valuable; I just don't know how you would present it and what the presentation would be. I think that's really hard. [pause]… I think it's more valuable to have it in daily life over a long period of time, but that's so different from person to person. That's a hard question.

Her narrative highlighted the complex challenge of knowing what to say and how to say it when talking about race so that the experience is positive, productive, and effective in dismantling racism rather than perpetuating it. Terra seemed caught in a juxtaposition between feeling that talking about race would need a formal presentation of which she was uncertain of the appropriate content and feeling that the most productive way to perpetuate specific ideas about race was through more casual, consistent lived experiences. In her own parenting, when choosing between the two options, she had chosen to err on the side of conveying attitudes and beliefs through non-explicit action and experience rather than words alone or words in conjunction with implicit parental modeling.

Corinne

To further complicate and expand the array of viewpoints expressed by the women, Corinne's perspectives differed from both Katie's and Terra's. She believed, like Terra and unlike Katie, that children *do* notice racial differences. But unlike both, Corinne believed that children can also be aware of and/or contribute to the mistreatment or unequal treatment of others based on race. She held these beliefs in part because of examples from her own parenting experiences.

Corinne believed that children are very attentive to the contexts in which they live, including the physical realities of the world, and that they are attuned to the reception of both implicit and explicit messages about values and beliefs as reflected in the world around them. When asked if she thought her children notice racial differences, she responded:

> Well, they know that there's difference in skin color.... [T]hey refer to [their friends' skin as], you know, "brown skin" or "light brown skin."... Garrett has also talked about how much he likes to touch [his Black friend]'s hair. So, they definitely see those physical differences. [pause] I don't know what else they see. I know that they see that we [as their parents] don't have a lot of African-American friends.... And so already the boys have way more friends of color [Corinne laughed] than I did growing up. But... they don't see lots of representations of Blackness or Black [people or people of color].

Corinne was entirely confident that her children see the physical world before them, including the color of people's skin and the color, texture, and style of their hair. Corinne's narrative also highlighted an awareness of the range of people and experiences present in her sons' lives, some of which the children had commented on directly. But she was also aware of absences or potential inconsistencies her children were likely experiencing within their lives in relation to race. She was concerned about how the children might internalize an understanding of race when they saw few adult models of authentic cross-race friendships or relationships and saw little to no positive representations of people of color in the media. She said:

> I don't think that they've been exposed to a lot of *negative* things about race, but they certainly, I'm sure, get mixed messages about whether it's worth pursuing relationships, or if it's okay – maybe not "worth it," but if it's okay – So... we may be unintentionally endorsing ideas about who it's okay to be friends with and not

okay with – just by who we have as friends and who we don't have as friends. So
I'm *sure* that they've internalized that message to a certain extent. Because they're
just sponges.

She went on to say, "I'm amazed at actually what they do internalize. They internalize a
great deal." While there may have been no intention to perpetuate divisive ideas about
race, Corinne worried that the children might (consciously or unconsciously) make
assumptions based on what they do see, or do not see, happening in the world around
them.

Corinne also contended that her children are developmentally capable of having
at least a vague understanding of racism, not necessarily because they have experienced
it or seen and understood its consequences, but because they are developing a capacity
for understanding fairness and they are able to understand the ways in which treating
people differently because of their skin color is unfair. She said:

[B]ecause we've talked about slavery and because we've talked about why what
Martin Luther King said was important, then, they have a vague idea of [what
racism is]. At least Garrett [who's five] does. Like, I don't think Joshua [who's
three], you know, I think he probably sees difference… but he's not, um, I haven't
talked with him explicitly about the fact that this bad thing [called slavery] used to
happen here in our country and that a lot has come about because of that.… I
think, on some levels Garrett has knowledge of racism. Um. [Pause.] I hope he
hasn't seen it too explicitly. But I don't know for sure.

Corinne also believed that children are capable of acting on racist ideas and
perpetuating racist notions, even if unaware of their racist foundations. She gave the
following example in which her son was playing a game with peers that included what
could be interpreted as racial slurs. In explaining the situation, she described her response
and recounted the importance she placed on dialogue for offering a platform from which
children and adults could more intentionally pursue fairness together. She said:

 [Garrett] had just turned four and he was at… school.… And he was outside
playing. And he was talking to me about how he'd played this game with his
friend, who looked like she was maybe Filipino or something, but I'm not entirely
sure. And they were playing and they were pointing out all of the "funny
monkeys" and all of the "American dukes."… [A]nd "American dukes" was short
for "American dooky" so… neither of these were very positive terms. But they'd

say, "There's an American dooky" — or "There's an American duke" — and "There's a funny monkey." And the funny monkeys were generally Mexican or Black [people], and the American dookies were the ones that were just White people. And I was *really* alarmed at this. And he was just telling me about this game in this very, you know, um, matter of fact kind of way. And I just didn't even know where to begin. He told me that [his friend] had come up with calling people, um, funny monkeys. I don't know.... I would like to believe that it wasn't Garrett that came up with that because that, to me, is such an *unbelievably* loaded expression that uh, I mean, I really had to get a handle on it before I could talk to him some more about it because I was so flustered and so upset. And he was not thinking of it in terms of— I don't know what, I don't know where he got the term, I don't know where they got the term "monkey" from, why they would use that term. But he was really *upset* when I said, "Well but everyone that you were pointing to could well have been, you know, American. *All* of us are American." And he said, "But they say *African*-American. So, aren't they— I mean, but, so they're from Africa first!" And it really was interesting that that was what he was hearing because that is sort of true sounding. Like it's, they're from Africa first. And they're American second. And so that makes them secondary...? You know and, *how* kids might internalize that. I was like, wow, that's weird. That's a very strange way of thinking about that. But he said, "Because we were just, you know, the people who are American and the people who *weren't*" was basically what he was [saying]— But he was seeing White people as American and then everybody else who were hyphenates weren't *truly* American. Because we're never called "Caucasian— American." And that's where the, like, "racelessness" comes in for White people. And then my friend... said that she always made her daughters write European-American down so that they would be a hyphenate too, [so] they would have that, kind of, account[ability]. And so I did say to him, I said, "Well, actually, you're Irish-American, Garrett." And we talked about that, but I also said, "It can be very hurtful for a person to be compared to a monkey." And he said, "But monkeys are one of my favorite kinds of animals." And I said, "But, they're an animal," ... and he said, "but we're an animals [*sic*] too" because I always say to him that we're animals. [Corinne laughed.] "That is true, Garrett." [Kelly and Corinne laughed.] So it was this many days discussion and that's when I got online and started

thinking, "I've gotta talk, we've gotta talk about... [race and racism]" Because it's already an issue. And so that was when I started reading all this stuff about how White kids don't *know* about racial issues, whereas kids of color almost have to know as sort of a survival mechanism. So yeah, I would say that [experiencing race and racism] starts very, very early and that if people want to say that it doesn't, it's because they *wish* that it didn't.

Corinne's experience with Garrett solidified for her several things. First, she had solid evidence that children could differentiate between people based on physical markers, including race, because they were doing so in a self-generated game. Second, it was clear that, whether or not they understood the full history and ramifications of their actions, children could participate in racially divisive deeds that could lay a foundation for the continued development of troublesome attitudes and beliefs about race. Third, children drew conclusions about racial categorization and belonging based on experience and language use, even if no explicit attention was drawn to either. Garrett's confusion about who might be American "first" and who might be "other" first and American "second" highlighted the problematic nature of Whiteness as unmarked in the United States. Not knowing that all Americans can be understood as "hyphenate Americans" by markers including race, ethnicity, or religion made it challenging for him to understand the error in his logic when trying to look at other children and ascertain their identity. What became clear was that the unmarked nature of Whiteness had already been detrimental to the ability of this four year old to engage in the world without expressing unintentionally learned racial biases. Based on his age appropriate capacity to categorize by difference and his ability to adopt and apply the language he heard in use in the world around him, he – like other children – was making race-based distinctions without having it have ever been explicitly instructed or modeled to him.

Also notable about Corinne's response was the way in which her understanding of racism allowed her to interpret and respond to her child's behavior. Understanding racist action as being on a continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist" allowed her to recognize her child's *action* as racist without labeling her child as a permanently "bad," racist person with no hope for redemption or growth. Because she felt no responsibility to label her child as either "racist" or "not racist," she was able to focus on the circumstances at hand and seek to offer a response that could foster increased racial awareness, sensitivity, and a desire for pursuing anti-racist practice in future situations.

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Also unlike the other two women who saw no reason to explicitly mention or discuss race or racism, except perhaps within the context of a classroom history lesson, Corinne saw that her children were learning racialized messages she didn't condone from the world around them. And for her, the best strategy for countering unwanted messages about race and racism was to be in direct conversation with her children – to explicitly name racist actions and beliefs and seek to replace them with more racially tolerant messages focused on equity and fairness. In a culture where White people are taught not to talk about race, Corinne sought to intentionally break the taboo and defy unspoken social etiquette. She explained her rationale, saying:

> [W]hen I worked at a crisis center... they would say that... if you're working on a suicide prevention line, asking someone if they're thinking of killing themselves is not going to give them the idea to kill themselves [*sic*]. It's not gonna be that there's something like, "Oh! [Snaps fingers.] That's what I should be doing!" And the same is true of talking about difference. The kids *already* see the difference; it's just not being talked about and articulated, and in some ways it can cause greater fear and misunderstanding if you don't [talk about it]. That's my feeling about it. We're not going to give them the idea to suddenly see things different because either they're already seeing it or it's already been introduced to them. Because it's just everywhere. It's *so* embedded. If we don't talk to them about difference I think we run the risk of [not] being able to do things to control the *story* of difference that they learn. The idea that there is no difference is sweet but naïve, and that's not the world we live in. Yet. [Corinne chuckled.] So we have to talk to [children] about [difference] until we get to that point.

For Corinne, talking with children about human differences did not suddenly make difference "real." Differences were already real. By talking about differences, she felt she could honor children's experiences of the world and help provide them a context to better understand what they were experiencing. Engaging in a culture in which racial bias and inequity is the norm, seeking to perpetuate anything other than the racist norm required direct attention.

As such, Corinne contended that parents should address race and racism intentionally and explicitly in their parenting. In thinking about the potential intersection of parenting and issues of race and racism, she said:

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I know where I think they *should* meet.... I think they should be parented. They should be issues that parents deal with and introduce. And if you're trying to get your child to live your values by attending church and by valuing education and by valuing the environment and by including things that you do everyday to try to show that you value the environment or that you value these things, that is [if] you value a just society as pertains to race then you have to involve certain things almost, you know, every day to show that you do value those things. And that's probably the best way that you can do anything is to show that that's something that you value. Whether or not you get it right exactly or know the best thing to do, at least you show that you value it.

Just as parents seeking to share their religious values might engage their children within their faith community or parents seeking to instill a sense of environmental stewardship might practice efforts to reduce, repair, reuse, and recycle with their children, parents interested in encouraging their children's adoption of specific values about racial justice and equity must actively engage in those practices personally and with their children. Corinne felt that leaving discussions of race and racism to lessons held within the walls of school classrooms was unlikely to be enough to solidify such values. She suggested that when values matter in others areas of social behavior and understanding that parents talk about them explicitly with their children, and she questioned why the topics of race and racism should be any different. Remaining silent and/or unengaged gives children fewer models of the desired values and beliefs and allows them to draw their own conclusions, right or wrong, about what they see in the world around them.

Corinne also asserted that White children are somewhat unique in how they learn about race and racism in American society. Being from the socially dominant racial group, White families have the option *not* to talk about race with their children, an option not equally available to families of color. Corinne said:

[Being White]'s affected my parenting because I was not *forced* to talk about race. White people I guess are in some ways considered "raceless," kind of. Whether they are or not, you know, it's sort of like when Midwesterners say they don't have an accent. Well, they have an accent to me. It's the same kind of thing.... [B]ecause they're the dominant culture, then they can be ["normal"].... And then the result, I think, [is] a lot of people think that they're also *beyond* race and there aren't a lot of ways that White people *do* talk about race because they

don't have to. You know, it's like men having to talk about gender equality when they really kinda don't have to. I mean, why would they? If they have a good position as it is! So I never grew up talking about race, except for that "You shouldn't talk about race."

Talking about some research she had read, she added:

From what I read, and I do believe this,… a five year old White kid might have no idea that there was ever such a thing as slavery but a five year old Black kid is gonna know all about slavery. So, I think that [kids of color] know a *lot* more by a lot earlier.

And to her, that knowledge was evidence that an inequality exists between the experiences of White people and people of color. Envisioning her hopes for her own children and their racial awareness and beliefs, she said:

I would like them to understand what it took me twenty-five years or thirty years to understand. I would like for them to *start* at that place, and then hopefully make some leaps forward.… Because, you know, Black people *have* to know White culture. They have to be fluent in it to some degree because that's the dominant culture. Um, [pause] I just, I would like it to move both ways. [pause] And, it's gonna become a cultural necessity. White people are gonna be in the minority soon, which I think is a great thing. But, um… in order for us to get past [race and racism], I do think that there has to be a greater understand[ing of and] a realization of its effects.

From Corinne's perspective, Whites are the only people in American culture who have the *option* to remain silent about race in their parenting. Their children are socially situated to benefit from White privilege, whether or not they acknowledge or understand it. As such, Corinne carried a strong conviction that explicit attention must be paid to issues of race and racism in parenting if current systems of social inequality are to be disrupted.

Correlations between learning about race and racism and learning in general

When speaking about their general beliefs about parenting, Corinne, Katie, and Terra were in agreement that children learn about the world and how to function within it through both direct and indirect experiences. Through action, observation, and communication with a wide range of sources, including family, peers, education, and media, children actively construct knowledge about the world around them. The women

stressed that children are highly observant sponges with the potential to gather both implicit and explicit knowledge and information from any and every experience. When asked about how children learn specifically about race and racism, some of the women's responses demonstrated inconsistency and a marked disconnect from their previous statements about how children learn in general.

Corinne's narratives were the most aligned when comparing beliefs about how children learn in general and how they learn about race and racism. She believed that young children are able to recognize human differences and have the ability to perpetuate racism, even if unintentionally. With explicit guidance, however, they can learn to recognize racism and act in support of racial justice. Her beliefs about how children learn race and racism were consistent with her beliefs about how children learn in general. In her narratives, she referenced ways her children are likely to receive racialized messages within the contexts of their family, peer groups, school settings, and media. She also named ways her children had drawn conclusions about the nature of race in the world around them based on both direct experiences and implicit connotations. In addition, she gave examples of how her son had constructed his own understanding of language he had heard being used and its racial implications, rather than being a mere recipient of knowledge given to him directly. She felt it important for parents to address issues of race and racism directly and explicitly in their parenting, believing that discussing race helps provide children a context through which to understand what they already see in the world around them.

Terra believed that children are able to observe racial differences between people but are incapable of understanding or participating in racist practice. She believed that race was learned informally through the process of life and addressing it directly with children wasn't particularly meaningful or long-lasting, except perhaps in response to a child's questions or in the context of a classroom history lesson. She gave examples of her daughter's ability to observe racial differences, but expressed uncertainty at young children's capacity to gain knowledge about race or racism without explicit, direct instruction, suggesting that even if they saw racist action that they would not be able to understand it.

Katie's narratives demonstrated the most inconsistency between ideas about how children learn in general and how they learn about the specific topics of race and racism. She denied children's ability to identify race-based differences among people, despite

giving examples that demonstrated her own children's ability to do so. She also denied children's ability to see or understand racism, a trait she marked as desirable and evidence of one's status as a "not racist" person. She contended that children only learn about race through direct instruction, whether from family, peers, or school, and felt that there was no context in which parents should explicitly address race and racism with their children because to do so would introduce them to racialized ideas they would not encounter or learn otherwise.

The more a woman believed in children's developmental ability to identify racial differences and to engage in the social world based on racialized ideas (whether or not the children understood the racial biases they were enacting or practiced them intentionally), the more consistent her beliefs about children's learning processes across the whole of her narratives. Women who denied children's ability to be aware of race and/or racism showed greater inconsistencies across her narratives when comparing beliefs on how children learn in general and how they learn about race and racism.

Children as racial beings (or not) in a racialized world

Corinne, Katie, and Terra expressed a range of ideas about their own children's place or role in our racialized world and articulated different levels of concern over their children's likelihood for developing and expressing racist ideas or actions. The mothers' ideas about their children's engagement in a racialized world fell along a continuum ranging from children as "pure" and entirely removed from and unengaged with any aspect of race or racism to children as observers of race and racism to children as participants in race and racism. As women moved from ideas of children as pure to ideas of children as participants, they also moved from having little or no concern that their children could perpetuate racist ideas or actions to believing that their children are already engaged in a racist world and that without intervention they will perpetuate those racist ideas and actions (if they haven't already).

At one end of the spectrum was Katie, who explicitly stated that her children are pure and untainted by any racist beliefs or attitudes. She also believed that her children are incapable of racist action. She said:

> I don't think they're gonna choose their friends by the color of their skin, the color of their hair, the color of their eyes, or their religion, or whether they have two dads or one mom and dad, or any of the above! I mean, I just don't think our two [kids] are [going to do that], 'cause they just have an unbelievable life! And um, because right now they're at the zoo with whoever and then they're gonna go [do something else with other people] and I mean, I just have not sheltered them into a little pocket. Um, but they're gonna hear it from other people. I mean, they're gonna— I'm just worried about the other kids that aren't, um, so open-minded [that] might try to bias them.

Katie saw her children as removed from socially divisive ideas of race and racism because their lives were filled with diverse experiences and diverse people. She believed that such contexts would safeguard her children from the ills of racist beliefs and practices. Her greatest worry was the influence of other, less "open-minded" children who had not had the same vastness of experiences and who, she believed, were thus more likely to have grown up with racist attitudes. Katie continued later in her narrative to further explain her concern, saying:

> [I]t kind of makes me sad if I think of somebody being prejudice. Or, if I think of somebody saying something to my kid that'll… make them— If someone says

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something bigoted or *mean*, biased, judgmental — that breaks my heart. Because right now [my kids]'re *so* pure. I mean, they're just so, they're so surrounded by so many different people and they just appreciate every single person. We've *never* said, "Look at that person. She's Black or White" or anything like that yet. And I don't think we ever will!

Katie saw her children as pure and thus void of any racial bias and entirely detached from racism at work in the world. In addition, she valued her children's purity on issues or race and racism, seeking to protect that innocence and believing that its corruption would come from those already embracing racist ideals and seeking to bias others.

On the other end of the spectrum was Corinne who saw her children as active participants in a world that is inherently racist. Never having had an option to exist separately from a racialized world, Corinne believed that her children have been embedded in a racist context from birth. As such, they are racialized beings fully capable of engaging in both racist and anti-racist activity. Her hope was that her children engaged themselves in understanding the presence and implications of race in the world around them such that they could make active and informed choices about their behavior and its potential to perpetuate or disrupt racism in the world.

Somewhere in the middle of the spectrum were the beliefs represented by Terra's narratives. She recognized her child as an observer of race, seeing her as neither removed from the racial nature of our world nor as an active participant in the practice of race or racism. She was also uncertain about her child's capacity to engage in racist practice. But, similar to Corinne, she recognized that children are embedded in a context that impacts their understanding of the world. They cannot be blamed for growing up in a context supportive of racism, even if they can be held accountable for the ways they contribute to the perpetuation of racism. Terra commented about the experiences of many White children growing up in predominantly White communities, saying that she felt that they did not see or understand racism and yet did racist things both intentionally and unintentionally. She said, "[I]t's not their fault. 'Cause if you don't grow up in [the midst of stark racial difference and overt racist action], you don't know. I don't think they could understand it to the level that I understand it — Because they don't live there. You know?" Terra seemed to believe that understanding the complexity of racism and its effects comes from experiences in which inequalities and injustices are blatant, and yet, when given the option, these are contexts parents endeavor to avoid in the raising of their children. Terra

believed that children do become participants in the racialized world around them, but was uncertain of the age or contexts under which such a transition happened.

In the place where ideas about parenting and ideas about race and racism intersect, a broad range of parenting perspectives exist, the consequences of which have the potential to perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality. Parents' beliefs about child development and specifically about the development of racial awareness and one's existence as a racial being impact their parenting practices and the messages their children receive, directly and implicitly, about race and racism in their own lives and in the larger world around them.

ACTIONS AND PRACTICES CONCERNING PARENTING AND RACE AND RACISM

When describing their parenting actions and practices as they related specifically to issues of race and racism, many of the parenting strategies Corinne, Katie, and Terra highlighted as White, middle-class mothers mirrored the strategies they had named when describing their parental actions in general. Key parenting tactics still centered around three primary topics: 1) parental modeling, 2) the role of communication (particularly verbal conversation) between parents and children, and 3) the intention to foster contexts – both material and experiential – that supported children's adoption of parental values around race and racism. And with all strategies, a high level of importance was placed upon parental consistency.

However, despite a continued focus on these categories of parental action, three key discrepancies developed between and across the women's narratives. First, when discussing parenting in general, all of the mothers expressed the belief that engaging in direct conversations with their children positively supported the learning of desired values and beliefs. But when talking specifically about parenting strategies as they related to race and racism, one woman continued to espouse the importance of explicit conversation, stressing that naming race and racism doesn't bring them into existence, while the other mothers felt that there were dangers in pointing out race or discussing it explicitly with their children. They argued that discussing race made it visible or turned it into a big deal when it shouldn't have been. Women with these perspectives engaged in little or no explicit conversation with their children about topics of race or racism, in direct contradiction to the parenting policy by which they strove to abide in their general parenting. Second, while all of the mothers expressed a desire for their children's contexts and experiences to include time amidst a diverse range of people, the ways in which they pursued that goal as it related to racial differences varied, as did what each described as "good" diversity or a "good mix" of diversity. And third, while all of the women heralded the importance of modeling an alignment between actions and values for their children, the values they claimed around issues of race and racism weren't always reflected in their behaviors. Their actions seemed to reflect a more true representation of their values – their implicitly lived values rather than their explicitly stated values.

Engaging children in direct dialogue about race and racism – Does it disrupt racism or enable it?

Corinne, Katie, and Terra expressed a range of perspectives about the parenting practice of engaging children in direct dialogue about issues of race and racism. At one end of the spectrum was adamant support for explicit dialogue, and at the other end of the spectrum was strong resistance. At the center of the debate were women's beliefs about implicit messages, and particularly about implicit messages' power (or lack of power) to convey values and beliefs to children. When considering parenting in general, all of the women described both explicit and implicit messages as having a powerful impact on their children's adoption of values. But when considering the power of implicit messages specifically concerning issues of race and racism, considerable discrepancies emerged. Mothers who believed in their children's capacity to absorb powerful ideas about race through both explicit and implicit means saw dialogue as an influential tool for sharing explicit messages about their racial values, for promoting racial tolerance, and for disrupting racism. Women who denied or overlooked the power or existence of implicit messages for shaping their children's views on race, or who didn't believe in their children's ability to understand messages about race and racism, resisted engaging in explicit dialogue about race with their children. They suggested that to talk about race would make it a bigger deal than it is, would disrupt the message that diversity is normal, or wouldn't matter anyway because actions and experiences are more effective than words at conveying values.

While all of the women expressed a desire for their children to be racially tolerant, relationships emerged between three key sets of beliefs: first, the women's beliefs about what racial tolerance looks like (in word and deed); second, their beliefs about child development as it relates to race; and third, their interest or willingness to engage in explicit dialogue around issues of race and racism with their children. Women who questioned children's ability to "see" race or understand racism were inclined to attribute less power to implicit messages about race than to implicit messages about other topics when considering the messages' ability to affect children's adoption of value-based ideas. Additionally, they were less likely to engage in talk with their children about race, sometimes viewing the absence of dialogue concerning race as an act of racial tolerance in itself. On the other hand, women who believed that children can "see" race and understand racism tended to believe that implicit messages about race are as powerful in

the process of conveying values as implicit message about other topics. They were also more likely to engage in explicit talk about race with their children.

Katie

When asked about engaging her children in dialogue about race or racism, Katie typically expressed no desire or need to do so. She said:

 [S]o far I've been non-explicit, but not for any reason in particular.… I think it's good to be direct and explicit, but then again – but see, I'm gonna go both ways on that answer – Because, um, I don't even think pointing it out is worth it.

When talking about parenting in general Katie's narratives stressed the value of direct conversation, but when addressing race, she was more reserved in her engagement, saying, "I'm not really pointing anything out. And all our neighbors are of every heritage and I'm not pointing that out." Katie's perspective seemed to reflect the attitude that direct dialogue would bring unnecessary attention to race and prove to be more divisive than unifying. In the following conversation she explained in greater detail her thoughts about discussing racial differences with her children.

Katie: I don't think I've really pointed out to them how divided this country was and how things have changed now. Things like that, yet.

Kelly: Do you think you will?

Katie: Yeah.

Kelly: How will you make a judgment about when would be a good time to do that?

Katie: Um… Well, I think that… any time is fine. I don't think it's too soon for them to really understand the history. Um, that goes with that whole level that I want them to be interested in other people and where they come from and how we all belong together in the same world. And can unite. As one, in a perfect world. Eh, you know, we've never really talked about, like, a kid being Black or White in our family at all.

Kelly: Do you think that that's something that you would ever bring up? Or do you think you would only talk about it if the kids bring it up?

Katie: Let me see. I'm just trying to think.… [A]ll we really talk about is things like [hair color]. When we draw people, just that their hair color's different. But we haven't really done a lot of skin color difference. But I'm

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willing and ready to talk about it at any time. It's like I haven't pointed it out as anything different. It's like, it's just normal that some people are Black. Some people are White. I mean, they see a *lot* of Black leaders now... even in, um, social networking. TV, or whatever. I mean, seems like a lot of times the presidents are Black or the teachers are Black or, something like that. Like, it seems like it's just pretty normal in their everyday. I mean, [there is the Kindergarten teacher at their school who is Black]. Honestly I don't think they were ever like, "Gee, she's different."

Katie valued not talking about race as a way of embodying her idea of racial tolerance — of not noticing differences. She expressed a willingness to talk about race, but saw little reason to bring it up, as her goal was to encourage her children to see all people as normal and belonging. She felt that pointing out racial differences would disrupt that effort. Even so, she talked about having discussed human differences like hair color with comfort and ease, a notably less taboo topic than discussing skin color and its racial implications. She felt that the presence of racial diversity in the children's everyday lives was enough to convey a message of equality and tolerance.[20]

Terra

Terra's perspective was similar to Katie's in that she felt that talking directly about race drew attention to it, making it a bigger deal than she felt it should be. She said, "I feel like if you start focusing on that, it could start making it a big deal. And I don't want it to be a big deal." She expressed a concern that children notice when adults make a big deal of things, and she worried that giving undue attention to issues of race and racism could perpetuate racial bias. She said, "I want [my daughter] to understand compassion. And differences that way. But I don't really make a point about race particularly. Because I feel like that'll be making a big deal of something that doesn't really warrant a big deal to be made out of."

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[20] In contrast, it is worthy to note that Corinne felt that her children had very limited exposure to representations of people of color in the media. And she worried that what they did see was not positive and instead reinforced racial stereotypes and misconceptions. While the contexts of Corinne's children and Katie's children were in no way identical, they were engaged in similar circumstances, suggesting that the women had two different views on the same topic. What one considered plenty of media exposure seemed too limited to the other. What seemed like fair or reasonable representations to one seemed biased to the other.

But like Katie, Terra did not object entirely to discussing race with her child. She did question, however, in what context it would be both contextually appropriate and age appropriate. At her daughter's current age of five, she felt it appropriate to talk about skin color and such, in part because she was aware that her daughter was already noticing physical differences between people. But she did not typically mention race, and she did not talk with her daughter at all about racism and the social consequences of race. She said, "I think when she's older... she'll hear me saying, 'Some people are racist' at some point. I mean, when she's old enough to understand what that even is." And Terra said that she would address her daughter's questions as appropriate, saying, "I'll let her kind of steer it a little bit. When she starts saying things or asking questions, then I kinda answer to the level it needs to be answered." In the meantime, race was "in the mix" alongside other discussions of difference. She explained her perspectives further within the following dialogue:

> Kelly: When we've talked before you've talked about a lot of different ideas that you've talked about with your daughter that some parents would find controversial or challenging. You know, talking about disability or homelessness or class differences. Or, I remember you talking about helping her understand about friends that had gay family members. So, to you, how is race something that's different than those types of things, [such] that race is something that you don't talk about but those are things that it's important for you to share with her?

> Terra: I think they all kind of interconnect really. I don't know if I don't specifically talk about, maybe I don't call it race but I talk about, "Some people are Black. Some people are White." You know? And you just kinda, I just kinda make it not a big deal. It's just the way it is. You know? "Some people have two mommies. Some people have two daddies. Some people have a daddy and a mommy." You know? That kind of thing. I don't separate that. I just think it's sometimes in the mix of all of it, without specifically using the term.

Terra avoided naming race with her daughter, perhaps because she felt it was socially charged in a way too closely aligned with racial inequality. Regardless, in her parenting, she typically avoided direct conversation about race, seeking to minimize its social power by not giving it direct verbal attention.

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In addition, Terra was very clear that she believed words to have limited power to form or change perspectives about race; rather, she felt that one's own actions and experiences, as well as observations of others' actions, served as the foundation for shaping racial attitudes. She said:

> I don't think that you can tell somebody something. I think that they have to experience it. I can tell you all day long that being a teacher is the best thing ever, but you may not change your job.... Unless you are in the situation and understand it for yourself, you're not really going to understand it.

To Terra, words have limited meaning unless you have the lived experience to give them depth. As such, talking about race has little positive impact because conversation partners can only understand talk about race through the lens of their own experiences with race and racism.

Corinne

Corinne took a different vantage, seeing dialogue itself as an action that, in partnership with other experiences, could help build knowledge and understanding around issues of race and racism. Unlike the other women, she named several instances in which she intentionally engaged her children in age appropriate dialogue around issues of race and racism. Rather than talking about race out of context, she used questions her children were already asking or experiences already a part of their lives as a springboard for conversation.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, for example, her older son had asked why a business in their community was closed for the day. She said:

> I was like, "Well, today is actually a holiday. It's Martin Luther King Day." And, [my son] was asking about that. And I said, "Well, you should probably hear him speak because he was this amazing man who inspired a lot of people to change the way they thought and the way they saw things." And so, [the "I Have a Dream" speech] is a seventeen minute speech, the whole thing. And he is just five! But I plunked him down in front of there and we watch[ed] the whole thing. And I can't watch it without crying. But he's gotten used to my crying at almost

everything anyway. But he just sits there and pats me on the back. And then we also got a book called *Martin's Big Words.*[21]

Corinne used her child's question as an opportunity to share in dialogue about race and racism using the historically contextualized story of a man and a movement. And she enriched the dialogue by providing both historical information in the form of a video and age appropriate interpretation and framing in the form of a children's book. And throughout this process she remained engaged with her child, seeking to answer questions and provide additional information as requested. While she did not expect her child to understand the vastness of race and racism in our nation – historically and present-day – through this singular series of interactions, she saw their conversations as a way to deepen her child's knowledge and lay the foundation for continuing dialogue in the future. Corinne applied the same approach in efforts to deepen her children's knowledge on other topics, including everything from the foundations of reading to manners and hygiene.

By making discussion of race and racism relevant to what the children already saw in the world around them, Corinne avoided the concern felt by both Katie and Terra that it would be inappropriate to point out race for the mere sake of pointing out race. Instead, Corinne sought to give her children contextual knowledge to help them better interpret the world already functioning around them. She gave another example of how she used dialogue in her parenting to address issues integrally connected to race including immigration, language, and politics. She said:

[W]e have talked about immigration [and] some immigration issues. We have talked about how… much we want to learn how to speak Spanish because there are so many Spanish-speaking people that come to this country that we would want to be friends with. Um, and how important it is for new people to come to this country. How this has always been a country where new people could come to and that (although it sometimes can take a long time) there is this "idea" – whether it's true or not – that anyone can be an American. And I think that it's true in a very malleable sense. I definitely don't think I [could] go to Japan and become Japanese. Um, because they're just so ethnically homogenous, but um – but there

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[21] *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* is a children's book written by Doreen Rappaport and illustrated by Bryan Collier. The book has won numerous literary awards including being a Caldecott Honor Book and a Coretta Scott King Honor Book.

is this sort of sense that that can happen [in the United States]. So, we talked about that. We talked a lot about Barack Obama becoming President and how important it was and what a great day it was for this country. And Garrett went with me to vote and he helped me fill in the little thing. So that, you know, I hope he has a memory of it because it *is* important.... And then we would watch the... video "It's a Brand New Day"[22] — you know, like, over and over and over again we'd watch that. And then, he was asking about various references in that and so I was trying to tell him about that.

By connecting with relevant experiences in the children's lives — neighbors with whom they have limited communication because of a language barrier, questions about what it means to be an American, parents' participation in voting for government leadership, the political atmosphere during intense political times — Corinne engaged her children in age appropriate, contextual conversations about race and race-related issues.

Intentionally engaging or avoiding dialogue about race with children

Katie and Terra seemed to understand and apply this same parenting approach in their own general parenting practices — to use children's questions and observations of the world to engage in conversation intended to help children better understand the world around them. And yet, they seemed to avoid conversations about race or felt that race-relevant conversations didn't arise naturally or would only arise if artificially inserted into dialogue. Terra gave an example from her own parenting in which dialogue had been a meaningful tool for helping her child understand human difference, but not as related to issues of race. She said:

My daughter has seen a couple of kids with Down's syndrome which is very confusing to her. She's kind of looked at that and she's asking me lots of questions about that. So [with] that I've [been] specifically talking to her. I said, "You know, honey, not everyone can do what you can do. Everyone's different."... My friend has a baby with Down's, and so [Aralyn] knows that there's [something different about her]— She can't quite put her finger on it, so she's asking a lot of questions about it. 'Cause she's like, "Why can't she walk?" 'Cause she's two, and babies

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[22] The video to which Corinne referred was a viral music video called "It's a New Day" organized and produced by Black Eyed Peas frontman will.i.am in 2008 as a tribute to President Barack Obama's election. The video can be viewed online at *http://itsanewday.dipdive.com/media/4172*. (The link was accessible as of 8/28/11.)

with Down's syndrome are very delayed. I said, "Oh, she's just, you know, she's having trouble,"… and just kind of talking about that kind of thing, where I would probably talk about [disability] more than [I would talk about] race. Like I don't think I've ever really had a full on [conversation about race with Aralyn]. 'Cause then I think it'd be making it a big deal. But for her,… I want to explain those things [like disability] to her because I think kids can be mean [about] what they don't understand…. I want her to understand that [my friend's daughter is] still a great person but she just hasn't been given everything that my daughter's been given. You've got to help her and be her friend and — I always ask her how she would feel. 'Cause I always talk about trying to be friends with everybody at school.

Terra saw great relevance and importance in addressing issues of developmental disability with her daughter, believing that having increased knowledge and understanding would encourage Aralyn's capacity for acceptance, empathy, and relationship building, particularly as related to a context Terra identified as a location of frequent social inequality. She did not, however, apply that same thinking to issues of race and racism, as Corinne did. If issues of race are comparable to issues of disability — such that those who do not embody the social norm or socially dominant identity marker are often the recipients of systemic disadvantage and the target of personal bias and discrimination — what potential damage is done by remaining silent about issues of race and racism? How does silence perpetuate children's (and adults') tendency to "be mean [about] what they don't understand"?

Perhaps even worse than silence about issues of race and racism was when dialogue intended to promote racial tolerance and knowledge was used in a way that could further engrain and perpetuate racial stereotypes and inequalities. For example, when discussing the ways that racism has seemed to decline since the days of her own childhood, Katie named situations in which she felt her children were becoming increasingly knowledgeable about the human diversity in the world around them. She said, "[S]ometimes we ask cab drivers where they're from. That kinda helps too. Just, it helps with like, 'Where are you from? What language do you speak?' and sometimes we'll look at it on the globe." While her intentions might have been good, Katie's example relied upon faulty assumptions about who is truly American. If a cab driver or store clerk or businessperson looked to be other than White and/or spoke with an accent or appeared

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to speak English as a second language, Katie's assumption was that such a person would answer a question like "Where are you from?" with a response such as "India" or "Haiti" rather than "Schenectady" or "Seattle" or "Chicago." She was modeling for her children that people of color or multi-lingual people are rooted outside of the family's community, that they are "different" and come from far away, even if they are multi-generation Americans, live next door, attend the same school, or participate in the same aspects of city-life as other citizens.

The examples from Corinne, Katie, and Terra's lives highlighted that language is a parenting tool that is inherently neither positive nor negative. The women provided examples in which dialogue was used in the service of disrupting or dismantling ideas that lead to social injustice or inequality, whether racial or otherwise. But language was also used in ways that could perpetuate ideas of inequality, intentionally or unintentionally. The women's examples also raised the question of what children learn from what is left unspoken. What is the power of dialogic absence? What messages do children receive implicitly from the rich contexts around them? And do those messages align or conflict with the values of social equality that the mothers claim to embrace?

As such, considering the reasoning behind *why* White families might intentionally choose *not* to discuss issues of race and racism is worth contemplating, especially considering the examples of families we have already seen who while avoiding conversations about race, simultaneously utilize dialogue as a key parenting tool for the conveyance of values of tolerance when addressing other issues of human difference. Corinne posited two potential reasons to explain White families' failure to discuss race and racism with their children. First, she suggested that White families don't talk about race because they don't *have* to talk about race and because White adults who *do* want to engage in dialogue rarely have models for *how* to talk about race. And second, by not talking about race and racism, White families may feel that they are protecting their children from the dark and depressing reality of racism and its consequences.

White families do not *have* to talk about race or don't know how to talk about race

Being a socially privileged group, White families have little incentive to address race directly in their parenting. As recipients of unearned social privilege, they are often unaware of the advantages they receive and their children are unlikely to need special information to understand their racial context. Children of color on the other hand are

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systematically disadvantaged by a racist system and are more likely to need guidance in understanding the inequalities they see or are experiencing in the world around them. As Corinne said earlier:

> [Being White,] I [am] not *forced* to talk about race…. [T]here aren't a lot of ways that White people *do* talk about race because they don't have to…. I never grew up talking about race, except for that "You shouldn't talk about race." And I think that being White does make a big difference that way, because I think that other cultures automatically know that they've got to tell their kids what the score is and help them understand. Because they're probably seeing things that are troubling, or at the very least weird.

She continued later saying:

> [M]y mom talked to me a little bit about [race and racism when I was a child] because she talked about her views of segregation and things like that. But um, again, we didn't *have* to talk about it that much. Because… we were just really surrounded by mostly White people.

Thus, as a parent contemplating how to talk with her own children about issues of race and racism Corinne found herself with little personal experience to draw upon, saying, "I don't have a lot of tools or experience… with having it talked to *me* or discussed with me."

Terra said that as a child she never had conversations related to race with either her parents or grandparents, and Katie said that the only direct messages she received about race encouraged pride in her own identity as a White American, making no reference to people of color. As such, of the three women included in the study, none had substantial experiences as young people about how to engage in dialogue concerning race and racism upon which to model their own parenting as adults.

White families do not talk about race in order to "protect" their children

In addition, Corinne suggested that White families remain silent around issues of race and racism because, like all parents, they want to protect their children from hardship and sadness in the world. But parents interpret how to protect their children, and from what, in vastly different ways. Some seek to protect their children through censorship — seeking to restrict or limit their children's exposure to and knowledge of the dark consequences of race and racism. Others believe that the best way to protect their

children is to provide them with knowledge and resources through which to understand the harsh realities of the world.

Corinne sought to explain, saying:

[As a culture], we've become much more protective of children then we used to be. We try to keep them from knowledge of anything that's bad or sad. And I think we do so at the risk of their own resilience. Um, I think they learn to be resilient by seeing that problems have happened [and] that they have the power to do something to change that problem. And I know that I'm not very good at it. I fall into that "wanting to protect" the children [mindset]. And I think a lot of White families don't talk about racism because they want to protect their children from this bad thing. And in the end what they end up doing is reinforcing it because they don't talk about.... I definitely understand that [protective] impulse, but you just have to read fairytales and the things they used to tell kids a couple hundred years ago to know that there was not always this belief that children couldn't hear scary things.... [Y]ou don't have to go into huge detail. But, kids need to be able to prepare themselves... for the fact that [the world]'s not always roses and sunshine.

Corinne, and others like her, worry that failing to be in conversation with children about issues of race and racism fails to equip them with the knowledge to understand what they observe and experience, fails to show them that they can contribute positively to social change, and denies them the chance to learn from others seeking to address racial injustices in their own communities and beyond. From this perspective, knowledge is power and denying children access to knowledge because it might make them feel sorrow or shame or anger or other difficult emotions is irresponsible and more destructive in the long run.

Even so, there was recognition that the impulse to protect one's children from harm is potent. In Katie's narratives, she talked about the desire to protect her children from the sorrowful and disheartening truths of race and racism and its history in our nation and around the world. Discussing the impact of learning the United State's racial history on children's understanding of race and racism, Katie said:

[W]hat year do they learn about the Civil War? I mean, that's when it gets pretty rough, when they actually see how humans were treated. That's just so sad to think that they're gonna even see that. I mean right now they don't know it.... I wish

they'd never know it. But they're gonna learn it in history. So basically, it's about learning it in history. Maybe I just try to shelter them as long as I can. [Katie chuckled.] I mean, they're exposed every day to every color in the city and they don't really need to know that these people used to be, like, chained and these people used to chain them. [Katie laughed.] I don't know. I mean, gosh, it's just kind of sad that they're gonna actually have to know that.

The narrative seemed to express a belief that if we could erase our nation's racial history that racism would no longer have any bearing on contemporary people. This seems logical if one denies the presence of institutional racism. Katie didn't intend to address race and racism with her children – leaving it for the context of an American History course in school – because she felt that discussing race would change her children's perception of the world and of the people around them, particularly people of color. And, to her, that change was undesirable. Believing that her children were naturally tolerant and free of racist attitudes or actions, she saw her own silence about issues of race and racism as an expression of both racial tolerance and efforts to protect her children from sadness.

The women's narratives reflected a range of attitudes about the role of dialogue in disrupting or perpetuating racism. While we saw examples in which the use of dialogue sought to interrupt racist ideas, we also saw examples in which language propagated racist attitudes. And while there were arguments both for and against silence around issues of race and racism when speaking with children, advocates of silence seemed to rest their convictions on false assumptions that institutional racism doesn't exist, racist acts of the past have no consequence on the present, or that children are incapable for absorbing implicit messages about race and racism from the world around them, even though the parents all agreed that children can absorb implicit meaning from their engagement in the world as relates to many other topics.

Of major concern was the worry that even if parents believed in addressing issues of race and racism directly with their children, they often lacked confidence in how to do so. Corinne said:

I do feel like it's important to talk about race and racism.… I'm learning how to do that, and I need more help.… [T]his keeps coming up as an issue in my life. Like, as a great sadness that I see… [and] I keep being reminded of it and so I'm

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thinking, "I'm supposed to be working on this somehow." Um, and so, whether that's via parenting or do[ing] something else that will help me to parent better or help others to parent better. I don't know. But, it is something that just keeps coming up and up and up and up and up.

Desiring racial diversity – Issues of inclusion, a desire for more diversity, and authenticity

When discussing their general parenting beliefs, all of the mothers explicitly expressed a desire that their children be exposed to a diverse range of people and life contexts. Under the umbrella of human diversity, they included a broad list of identity markers, representing people both similar and dissimilar from themselves. Conversations included references to nationality, race, ethnic origin, social and economic class, family constellations (including biological and socially chosen families with non-heterosexual and/or adopted members), and (dis)ability. The mothers hoped that their children would grow to have knowledge of human differences and would express respectful tolerance and/or would build authentic friendships with those different from themselves. The women's narratives showcased varied understandings of "exposure" to diversity – ranging from mere contact with those different from one's self to meaningful interpersonal engagement with others in ways that took into consideration the experiences of all involved parties. Key to the mothers' perspectives was an understanding of the intentionality or lack with which they approached engagement with diverse others – whether they made an intentional and conscious choice to raise their children within a context of human diversity or if they had found themselves in a context of diversity, not having sought it directly, but having found it desirable nonetheless.[23]

In many ways, the women's attitudes remained consistent when contemplating the potential desirability of raising their children in a context that included racial diversity (rather than talking about diversity more generally). Women who had previously described an intentional choice to raise children who are conscious of, knowledgeable of, and engaged with diverse peoples were also women who sought explicit and deliberate ways to include racial diversity in the typical lived experiences of their children. White women who found themselves unintentionally surrounded by diversity did not resist experiences in which their children might interact with or learn about people of color, but were not proactive about supporting their children in that process. In addition, they did not express awareness of or a hope to decrease the racial segregation in their everyday lives, as did women actively seeking to foster racially heterogeneous experiences for their children.

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[23] To revisit the details of the women's perspectives on the desirability of diversity in general, see the section titled "Perspectives and beliefs on parenting: Desiring diversity – With whom or what do you want your child to engage?"

Desiring racially diverse and inclusive environments and material goods

Both Terra and Corinne expressed an explicit desire that their children's everyday lives reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the city around them. Both spoke about ways they have sought to have racial diversity reflected in the consumer materials with which their children engage, including toys, books, and media. Terra said:

> I'm very careful not to talk about race and I try to be very aware of the ways others talk around [my daughter]. [But] I try to integrate [race] into her life. I told you I bought her a Black baby doll. And the Black princess movie from Disney [2009's *The Princess and the Frog*].

Terra's actions were reflective of her earlier expressed convictions. She believed that words have little ability to positively impact one's beliefs about race, thus she saw no need to discuss race in the presence of her daughter. (Even so, she seemed to believe that words have some capacity to affect beliefs because she sought to monitor others' references to race in the presence of her child.) Terra did, however, trust that actions and experiences do have the power to shape beliefs. As such, she worked to help frame experiences and contexts for her daughter that would be inclusive of racial diversity.

Corinne too utilized material goods to support a desire that racial diversity be a present part of her children's lives. She said, for example:

> [W]e've tried to get as many books as we can that have protagonists of different backgrounds. And I'm still working on increasing the library for that. Because it's surprising that either those books are gone from the [public] library and nobody can find them, or they're just not there. You kind of have to search them out a little bit. I mean, there are the usual ones, like *[The] Snowy Day* [by Ezra Jack Keats] — And... [that one's] actually written by a White Polish guy, which is so fascinating to find out. But, [the books] don't focus on the race of the child. They're just a child having a great day and they just happen to be Black, and I like that. You know, I appreciate that.

In both situations, the women named specific ways they sought to provide their children with access to material goods inclusive of those who are not White. Katie made no such comments in her narratives.

Desiring more racial diversity in personal connections and relationships

Terra's and Corinne's parenting perspectives were also aligned by their explicit vocalizations expressing desire for more diversity and more racial integration in their children's lives and in their communities. Both expressed hopes that their children would have more opportunities to engage, learn, and build friendships with people of color. Corinne said:

> I'm glad when the boys have opportunities to make friends with people who are from other backgrounds, and so, I encourage that to whatever extent that I can. So, like when Garrett wants to go play over at [his Black friend]'s house, then I'm happy to try to make that happen…. I want there to be *more* opportunities like [that.]

And just as she expressed a wish for increased opportunities for her children to build interracial friendships, she also expressed a wish that her neighborhood were more representative of the demographic diversity of Chicago. She said:

> [B]eing able to find a house that we could afford was important… [but] it's a much Whiter neighborhood than I would have wanted, or that I even *knew*, at the time that we bought…. I wish that the neighborhood was more ethnically diverse. Although… it's very Polish. The boys have learned lots and lots of things about Poland, and… we have wonderful neighbors…. But again, I wish that there was [long pause]. Well, I don't know. It's just, it was not necessarily what I thought of when I thought about "Chicago." I don't really know what I was expecting. The South has it problems racially, but it's sort of integrated, in a way. Like, you can grow up living next door to someone who's Black. And go to school with a pretty diverse group of people. But in Chicago it is *really* segregated. And the *schools* are really segregated.

Repeatedly in her narratives, Corinne expressed a concern over the segregation she had seen during her time living in Chicago, and as her children grew towards being school-aged, she was concerned, too, about the demographic composition of their school's student bodies and whether they would accurately reflect the diversity of the city or reflect the segregation she had already seen within many, if not most, of the city's neighborhoods.

In the following conversation, Terra, too, expressed the wish for more diversity in her daughter's school-based peer group.

Terra: She's exposed [to racial diversity]... but not totally. There's some [diversity] at school – some Hispanic and Black, one boy who lives in a shelter near her school. I think it's important to have some economic [diversity] in there too. You know, but the neighborhood's pretty White. It's not integrated. ...

Kelly: Is she exposed to as much racial diversity as you'd like?

Terra: A little bit more would be nice, but how? You can't have everything.

Both Terra and Corinne recognized that segregation played a part in the experiences of their children, and while they had hopes for greater integration so that their children could build relationships and friendships with a wide variety of people, both were also at a loss as to how to do that in a broad enough way to change their children's (and their own) racial landscapes.

In contemplating that issue, Terra's narratives suggested two strategies that have contributed to her family's engagement beyond Whites-only contexts: 1) engaging with diverse others despite potential discomfort and 2) making an effort to live and work in contexts reflective of human diversity. First, she gave an example in which her husband took part in a social gathering of work peers and their families, most of whom were people of color. Despite his personal discomfort, Terra felt that a willingness to participate in the situation offered opportunities for her husband to address and begin to work through his own discomfort, while potentially modeling positive interracial relationships for their daughter who attended the event with him. Second, Terra sited her commitment to living within the city limits rather than moving to the predominantly White suburbs, as so many of her friends had, as one effort she's made to try and maintain the greatest possibility for racial diversity to be part of the family's everyday lives. Engaging with racially diverse people becomes increasingly difficult when you live in a racially homogenous place. Terra referenced both strategies in the following account, saying:

[My husband] took [Aralyn] to his work [event]. And he was the only White guy there. And she was the only White child there. And he... said he felt uncomfortable, but he was fine with it once he was, like,... in the situation. Like, when he was rolling up to the scene, he was kinda scared a little bit, which I get. But then he was in there and he was fine. And she was dancin' with the ladies and eatin' whatever – And chatting and they loved her. And she was helping them

plant flowers and it was a good day. You know. It was fine. But... she was exposed to a situation where she was, you know, she's seeing other things than just White people. Like – You know, I'm trying to do that a little bit more.... [W]e try to make a little bit more of an effort than I think some people make. But still, her experience growing up is gonna be completely different than either of ours. You know? So. That's why I want to stay in the city. If I can.

Terra saw a connection between city life and the possibility for engaging with racially diverse people in all areas of life – schooling, employment, neighborhoods, extra-curriculars, and so forth – and she felt that that possibility would be lost by changing their geographic context and moving to the suburbs. Like Corinne, Terra sought to place her family in contexts of increased rather than decreased racial diversity.

Katie's narratives differed from those of the other women because she made no mention of wanting more racial diversity in her life. She acknowledged and appreciated the racial and ethnic diversity around her, but made no call for more. As seen earlier, she spoke at length about her own transitional process from living a life in the context of predominantly White populations to one more racially integrated. Adjusting to the increased presence of people of color was a significant transition for her, and she still struggled with feeling that she was a racial minority, despite statistical evidence that she was not a racial minority within the contexts of her city, her neighborhood, or her children's school community. She expressed contentment with the racial diversity already around her but also expressed feeling threatened and overwhelmed when considering an increase in the presence of people of color, let alone a representational integration of the city's population. Of note is that Katie's contexts were no more integrated than Terra's and Corinne's, perhaps even less so in some contexts, so Katie's response cannot be credited to living in an already more integrated environment.

Seeking racial diversity with authenticity

Similar to Corinne's earlier discussions of who benefits from the presence of increased diversity,[24] Terra made a strong argument for the importance of authenticity in intentionally engaging racial diversity. She highlighted a difference between engaging diversity because it's an integrated component of your life and engaging diversity for the

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[24] See the section titled "Perspectives and beliefs on parenting: Desiring diversity – With whom or what do you want your child to engage?"

sake of engaging diversity, whether or not it has any meaningful connection with the larger context of your life.   The following conversation reflects some of her thinking:

> Terra: [I] just try to exposure [my daughter] to things as much as I can without over-trying. Just kind of like, what I have in me anyways. Little things here and there....
>
> Kelly: When you were talking about making an effort to expose her without over-trying – "Over-trying" meaning… Meaning what?
>
> Terra: Like, "Let's – Today we're going to Cabrini Green [a Chicago neighborhood known for its history of problems associated with public housing, poverty, organized crime, and gang violence] and we're gonna walk through it, and I'm going to show you that some people are –" You know….   Just, maybe [it's] not even [about] race so much. Just people in different situations. …
>
> Kelly: So, it sounds to me – and you can help me understand if this feels right to you. So it sounds like, "over-trying" [is when you're]… creating situations that really don't have meaning or context to [Aralyn's] experiences –
>
> Terra: Right.
>
> Kelly: – but you're trying to allow natural conversations that are connected to what's already going on [in her life].
>
> Terra: Right-right. Exactly.

As Terra's narrative suggested, creating excuses to be amongst diverse populations can be problematic for numerous reasons, especially when undertaken solely as the duty of a "good" parent and when engaging contexts extensively beyond the realm of one's typical life. First, without being embedded within the context of their own daily lives, children are unlikely to accurately receive any intended messages about parental values as they might be applicable to their own experiences. Second, such an endeavor blatantly positions racially and/or economically disenfranchised peoples as objects for the benefit of someone else, without consideration of their own needs or desires. In addition, such fly-by engagements prevent authentic cross-race relationships, while being likely to maintain divisions and perpetuate racial stereotypes and injustices. Terra saw the integration of positive race relations as an important part of everyday life, but felt that those experiences needed to be part of the day-to-day, not special excursions or outings. As example, she said:

[J]ust having [Aralyn] physically walk in front [of the Black men selling merchandise near our house has an impact] – And they'll say… "Hey little girl" sometimes and she'd be like "Hi," you know, or whatever. A lot of people wouldn't allow that interaction to even happen. And I don't seek it out. It's not like I'm like, "Oh! There's some Black kids. I'm going to go walk my daughter in front of [them]." It's just like, I feel comfortable… just walk[ing] past them.

When looking at the mothers' desires for racial diversity in their children's lives, several patterns were apparent. Women who spoke about a desire for diversity in general and felt comfortable with increasing the frequency and depth of interactions with a range of diverse people were also supportive of racial diversity and expressed a desire that it play a role in their lives of their children. These women sought racially inclusive material goods for their children's use, valued opportunities for their children to build greater numbers of meaningful relationships with people of color, explicitly wished for more diversity, and yet were cautious about engaging with racially diverse others if the engagement wasn't beneficial to all involved and/or wasn't an authentic encounter. Alternatively, women who spoke about a desire for diversity, both in general and racially, but who expressed feeling threatened or feeling like a racial minority, made no comment about seeking racially inclusive consumer goods, about wanting more racial diversity in their daily life, or about a desire for their children to build lasting relationships with people of color. Rather, their narratives suggested that their contexts were as racially integrated as they could or should be, and there was little or no talk about building relationships and friendships across racial lines.

Parental modeling – Wanting to model racial tolerance, but basing actions on different understandings of what is racist

In their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra each spoke of a desire that their children be racially tolerant, and all agreed that as parents they are important models of values and beliefs for their children. Each expressed the intention to serve as a model of racial tolerance for their child(ren), but their parenting actions, and arguably their success or failure at modeling tolerance, were impacted by differing understandings of what constituted racism and what constituted racial tolerance. Differences in understanding seemed reflective of a combination of each woman's definition of racism and her beliefs about child development as related to race and racism. Examples the women provided of their own parenting actions demonstrated different levels of attentiveness and resistance to racism, ranging from parental action likely to perpetrate racism, to parental inaction in response to actions self-identified as racist, and finally to direct parental confrontation of racist actions. Women who seemed to engage in the least amount of racist action in their parenting, as suggested by their narratives, shared at least two characteristics. First, those who described the fewest and least severe incidents of racist actions in their own parenting also held the broadest definitions of racism – inclusive of personal and institutional racism, subtle and blatant racism, and the perspective of racism as a continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist" rather than a "racist"/"not racist" dichotomy. And second, those most engaged in pursuing not just racially tolerant behavior but anti-racist behavior expressed a willingness to experience internal conflict and/or to engage in interpersonal conflict (especially with family or friends) in efforts to disrupt racism.

While all of the narratives reflected the perspectives of White, middle-class women who would likely describe themselves as progressive liberals in support of racial equity and racial tolerance, their actual parenting beliefs and practices offered an array of parenting models ranging from those likely to perpetuate racism to those making strident efforts to disrupt racism.

Corinne

Corinne's narratives reflected the perspective from this study most likely to disrupt racism and encourage anti-racist action through the practice of parenting. Corinne understood racism broadly, naming and offering explicit examples of personal, institutional, blatant, and subtle racism, and she focused on the pursuit of increasing the

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racial knowledge and awareness of herself and her children while decreasing their participation – intentionally or otherwise – in attitudes and actions likely to reflect or perpetuate racism. She also believed that children, including her own, were capable of noticing differences among people – including racial differences – and were capable of actively contributing to racist action, whether or not they were aware of doing so. To the extent that was developmentally and age appropriate, she believed that children are able to understand and confront racism – particularly blatant and interpersonal racism – because they are developmentally able to understand and respond to issues of fairness and empathy.

In addition, her narratives repeatedly reflected a willingness to engage in self-reflection and to experience internal and interpersonal conflict in efforts to disrupt racism. Feminist standpoint theory suggests that both are key undertakings in the process of dismantling White supremacy. She also expressed awareness of and concern regarding her own racial biases, naming her feelings of discomfort as subtle forms of racism to which she felt compelled to address and work to diminish. She saw herself as engaged in an unbounded journey towards anti-racist practice – always "in process" and never "arrived."

She also named numerous situations in which action – often in the form of dialogue – was used to confront racism she had identified in the world around her. She named discussions with her mother pointing out examples of subtle racism she was perpetuating, arguments with extended family disputing their blatantly racist remarks of meritocracy and White supremacy, and conversations with her own son about a playground game in which he was participating that perpetuated racist language and stereotypes. Her willingness to engage in interpersonal conflict was motivated, at least in part, by her belief that people can change, that through knowledge, awareness, and intention they can become significantly less likely to perpetuate racism. Engaging in conflict, while hard, was motivated by faith that personal change was possible.

In addition to defensive acts, Corinne was in constant thought about how to offensively support anti-racism in her parenting practice – through selective use of racially inclusive material goods and media, intentional attention to the presence and absence of racial diversity in her own and her children's contexts, and an exploration of ways to more richly, authentically, and sustainably engage with people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds through dialogue and shared experience. She hoped for her parenting to

reflect these intentions and sought to be explicitly open and proactive with her children in word and deed about issues of race and racism such that the children would come to embody anti-racist attitudes and intentions in their own practice.

Corinne was clear that she saw parenting as an important location for the sharing of anti-racist beliefs and that issues of race and racism should not be seen as separate from issues of parenting. Instead, efforts to be effectively anti-racist needed to be embedded in the very nature of parenting practices. She said:

> [P]robably the best way that you can [teach children] anything is to show that that's something that you value. Whether or not you get it right exactly or know the best thing to do, at least you show that you value it.... I don't know that we do it everyday, but getting books and talking about [diversity] and trying to, um – just seek ways to be in relationship with other people.... [Y]ou have to include it in a holistic thing that you value and include that in your *life*. And for me, it would be one of those [parenting] priorities to include, you know.... Because it actually directly impacts people's lives on a day-to-day basis.

Even so, Corinne was very clear that attempting to actively and explicitly parent around issues of race and racism was very challenging, in large part because she felt a strong sense of uncertainty about specific concrete things she could do. She described her parenting as an effort of intention, but was also certain that there would be, and had been, times that her parenting practices would inadvertently perpetuate the racism she hoped to disrupt. She expressed a desire for more examples or models to guide her practice, saying:

> I think it's difficult to pull [issues of race and racism] into your parenting when you don't have a lot of ex[amples]. I mean, I don't have *any* examples of how to [do it]– And I'm kind of like, "Uh, I'll find a book! And I hope that that'll help! And oh thank goodness there are some people of color that go to our church. Hardly any, but a few! So, okay, maybe that'll help a little. And uh –" You know, so it's [really hard].

Believing that her children adopt values and beliefs from their many observations and engagements with the world, Corinne was certain that they have the capacity to exemplify racism in their attitudes and actions, even as small children, and in order to teach them an alternative and racially just way of being, she was committed to modeling racial tolerance and anti-racist practice to the best of her evolving capacity.

Terra

Terra's perspectives on race, racism, and parenting served as somewhat of a mid-ground between Corinne's and Katie's viewpoints. Like Corinne, Terra understood racism broadly, naming specific examples of personal, institutional, blatant, and subtle racism. She, too, seemed to preference descriptions of racist action or attitude as "more racist" or "less racist" rather than absolutely "racist" or "not racist." Where she differed from Corinne was a failure to include the role of social power in her definition of racism, noting little difference between racism and racial prejudice. As such, anyone could be racist, whether they be White or a person of color. (In contrast, Corinne's definition suggested that people of color can be prejudice and carry racial bias, but the term "racism" was reserved for prejudice and bias paired with White social power.)

Like Corinne, Terra believed that children can identify differences between people, including race-based markers of difference, and she sited experiences with her own child as evidence. But, Terra did not believe that children notice or understand racist attitudes or actions present in their everyday lives. More so, she believed that their lack of awareness and understanding prevented them from engaging in racist practices or beliefs, even inadvertently.

Terra believed that all people have a set of core values that develop early in life, and after that formative period one's values sway very little from their roots. One's attitudes and beliefs about race and racism are part of this set of unchanging core values. As such, Terra seemed to express no real internal conflict about whether or not her parenting practices might contribute to the perpetuation of racism. She was confident that her core values reflected racial tolerance and was steadfast in the belief that her core guided her well. Her belief in the unshakability of one's core values also dictated Terra's disinclination to confront some of the racist actions she saw in the world around her. While she gave an example of confronting racism in her husband's language when in the presence of their daughter, she also gave an example in which she did not confront a friend's racist actions in the presence of their daughters because she didn't want to make a scene and because her beliefs about child development suggested that her daughter wouldn't notice or understand the subtle racism anyway. In Terra's example, she, her friend, and their children were walking in a busy part of town and her friend suggested they cross the street to avoid Black men selling tickets to a sporting event. Terra said:

[T]here are African-American guys that can look kinda scary to some people I guess. Selling tickets. You know. Trying to scalp. Generally, they hang out on [the] corner. We walk by them all the time. So my daughter physically walks in front of those people all the time. I was with a friend one time with her little girl and she wanted to cross the street. I'm like, "Why do we have to cross the street?" I didn't understand why she wanted to cross the street. She goes, "'Cause there's those guys over there."... [A]nd then she said it in front of my daughter, and I'm like, "Oh, they're fine." You know, like, "They just sell tickets." You know. And I think we ended up crossing because we didn't want to make a big commotion about it. Make a big [Terra chuckled] "race stance" at that point. I'm like, "They're harmless. They're just selling tickets." You know?... I didn't really even think about it until my friend said "Let's cross the street," and I'm like, "Whoa!" I didn't understand why she wanted to cross the street because we were going somewhere the other way and she said, "Those guys are there." I'm like, "Oh. They're fine. They're harmless. They're always there."

While Terra's words sought to deflate the situation, her willingness to acquiesce to her friend's desire to cross the street was complicit with racist action. According to Terra's own belief system, children's adoption of values places heavy preference on what can be learned through action and experience rather than words. While Terra knew her friends' attitudes reflected racist ideas, she did not confront them as directly as she might have, in part, because she believed people don't change. As she was quoted earlier, "I think people are really guarded about things like that. They have pretty set opinions that they've had since they were raised. I can't say anything to change that. They're defensive." But if actions speak louder than words and words don't matter, as Terra suggested, then what would Aralyn learn from this experience? Her mother *said* people of color were fine but her *actions* showed a willingness to avoid them when with her friend.

Terra believed that parents are pivotal in modeling racial tolerance to children. She said:

I think what your child sees you doing with people of [a] different race or what you say about them has a huge impact on how that's going to shape them. Like, if I was a parent that says, "Well, I'm not going over there because he's got an Indian dad," what would that tell my kid? Like, "What do you mean by that? Why? Are they bad?"... Or, you can just go over there because they're normal

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people and they're friends and you just go on with it. You know? So, I think if you just go on with it, they're going to see that that's the way you're supposed to be, or should be. If you hesitate or have reservations or say things, they're gonna think — I mean, you're their role model at this point in their life. So, I think [your behavior] has a huge impact.

Terra worked to serve as a positive model for her child through the selective use of racially inclusive materials and media and through an engagement with racial diversity as it naturally arose in their daily lives. And yet, her efforts were likely impeded by her disbelief in children's ability to see, understand, and participate in the world as racially grounded and perhaps biased people and by her occasional silence in confronting others' racist acts. Even while such a confrontation might not change the attitudes of the other person or group, it might help shape the core values she saw developing in her daughter.

Katie

Of all the study participant narratives, Katie's accounts reflected the perspective most likely to perpetuate racism through the practice of parenting. In comparison to the other women's narratives, she defined racism the most narrowly, offering examples of its personal and blatant nature, but excluding any mention of or allusion to its systemic and subtle nature. In addition, her narratives expressed a dichotomous understanding of racism. An action, belief, or person could only be understood as absolutely "racist" or "not racist" with no space for nuance or gradation. Additionally, while she acknowledged children's ability to note human differences among people, she denied her own children's ability to see racial differences, suggesting that such an awareness would be reflective of racial bias. Similarly, she believed her own children to be incapable of racist beliefs or actions, citing their purity and their "open-minded," "exposed" lifestyle as evidence. Understanding herself to be a "not racist" person, Katie expressed no apparent internal conflict or concern about the possibility that her parenting actions might perpetuate racist beliefs and practices in her children, even inadvertently. Similarly, her narratives offered no examples of actively confronting racism in her own life — in conversation or action, offensively or defensively, personally or in the presence of her children. This may be attributed largely to her failure to identify racist actions and attitudes in the world around her and within her own practice. Numerous examples from her own narratives suggested that she perpetuated racism, particularly in its subtle and institutional forms, in her day-to-

day life, as evidenced by examples including her stance on affirmative action, the affirmative action-based lawsuit filed against her in her previous job, her blatantly misguided stereotypes about people of color particularly on the Southside of Chicago, and her assumption that cab drivers of color are neither American nor native English-speakers. While she explicitly advocated parental modeling of racial tolerance, her own beliefs about racism and child development made it highly likely that her parenting practices perpetuated racist beliefs and actions in the parenting of her children.

While all of the mothers were well-intentioned, their narratives made clear that good intentions are not enough to effectively, consistently, or even appropriately utilize parenting as a tool for the disruption of racism or for the encouragement of anti-racism in the next generation. Without a deliberate and intentional rethinking of the meaning and manifestations of racism, the meaning and purpose of "exposure" to racial diversity, and the expression and intention of "protecting" children in connection to race and racism, racist structures and systems are likely to remain intact. Additionally, until parents are better educated on the truth of child development, especially as it relates to race, they are unlikely to see their children as racial beings actively engaged in our racist world. A significant mind shift is necessary for the disruption of Discourses of White supremacy and the adoption of Discourses of resistance.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PARENTING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AND LARGER SOCIETAL IDEOLOGIES

In addition to documenting and relaying the accounts of White, middle-class, heterosexual mothers and their perspectives on issues of race and racism in relation to parenting, this study sought to interrogate those narratives to seek better understanding of their relationship to larger societal discourses and/or ideologies that serve to either perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality. What emerged was a number of social Discourses that when manifested through White, middle-class parenting served to sustain and perpetuate the racial ideology of White supremacy. The more a woman's beliefs and practices reflected Discourses of White supremacy, the more inconsistency was evident when comparing her general ideas about child development and parenting to her ideas about issues of race and racism on the same topics. Conversely, the less a woman's beliefs and practices reflected Discourses of White supremacy, the greater consistency was evident between her ideas about child development and parenting in general and as applied to race. Patterns in the narratives suggest that without the interference of racist ideologies, the White, middle-class women would have been more likely to apply one overarching parental philosophy across the whole of their parenting practice. With the disruption caused by White supremacy, however, parents made illogical justifications and exceptions to their own parenting philosophies that applied only to parenting around issues of race and racism.

As White, middle-class, heterosexual adults, the women in the study reflected a segment of society awash with social power, but socially situated such that their own unearned privilege often feels invisible. While all of the women considered themselves advocates of racial equality and expressed the hope that their children be racially tolerant[25], their narratives highlighted practices that ranged from intentional resistance to White supremacy to unconscious (but unequivocal) collusion with the tenants of White supremacy. While individuals are accountable for their own choices and actions, the intention behind examining these parents' accounts was not to mark them individually as

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[25] It should be noted that racial tolerance and racial justice are not equivalent terms. Tolerance can be understood as a willingness to endure or put up with difference, whereas justice relates to not merely allowing differences to coexist but actively pursuing equal and fair treatment and opportunity for all. The act of being racially tolerant does not necessitate engagement in or support for actions that foster larger social and structural changes conducive to racial justice and equity.

"good" or "bad" parents or to label them as "racist" of "not racist" people, but to understand in distinct ways that their narratives both reflect and contribute to larger social ideologies about race. The women's voices highlighted everyday parental acts of both complicity and resistance to the White supremacist contexts in which we are all embedded. Their stories help to delineate a larger racial landscape and possible sites of contestation along which efforts seeking positive racial change might be most successful. Grounded, as this study is, in the belief that everyday people in the everyday act of parenting have a role to play in the perpetuation or disruption of racism, these women's stories can serve to accentuate fault lines along which White supremacy can be made visible and all people — including racially privileged Whites — can be guided towards questioning and dismantling racism in their own lives.

The big disconnect – White, middle-class parenting and White supremacy

Within the study, the narratives of White, middle-class mothers served to highlight three key bodies of parental knowledge: 1) the mothers' beliefs about child development as related to how children learn and their sensitivity to explicit and implicit messaging, 2) the mothers' beliefs about effective parenting strategies, and 3) their beliefs about parenting around issues of race and racism. While there was great consistency across the narratives about how children learn, the power of implicit and explicit messages to impact children, and effective parenting strategies, contentions arose around all of these topics when focused specifically on parenting around issues of race and racism, rather than focused on parenting in general. The women's accounts demonstrated some of the ways that Discourses of White supremacy disrupt mothers' general knowledge about child development and interfere with the consistent application of typical parenting practices to parenting specifically around issues of race and racism.

Across all three mothers' narratives was consistent agreement about the myriad ways in which children learn about the world around them. Mothers agreed that their children grow to understand and engage in the world through their experiences, through their observation of models (be they parents, peers, media, or other sources), and through other pathways of communication. In addition, the mothers agreed that their children are like sponges absorbing knowledge and meaning from both explicit and implicit sources. Believing that children notice even little things and don't need explicit explanations in order to absorb ideas and values, parents were consciously thoughtful about their child(ren)'s whole experience and generally ascribed to the idea that actions reflect values and that as active observers children can and do construct meaning from what they experience in the world around them. In general, the women did not take lightly the power of implicit messages and often conveyed the added intention to support the implied meanings of their actions with explicit conversations contextualizing, explaining, and solidifying the values and beliefs they sought for their children to adopt.

The mothers' narratives also showed consistency in the belief that the most effective parenting strategies to encourage children's adoption of desired values and principles link parental behaviors and actions with the modes through which children learn most effectively. Believing that children learn through active observation, adults sought to have their own lives and contexts intentionally model valued ideas and beliefs. Trusting in the power of talk, parents sought to engage their children in explicit conversations to

guide and frame their understandings. And confident in the significance of personal experiences to frame beliefs and values, parents actively pursued supporting a context that advocated their beliefs.

When addressing parenting in general, beliefs about how children learn and about effective parenting strategies were consistent across all of the narratives without exception. The overarching parenting philosophy was clear and all of the mothers made concerted efforts to enact parenting practices responsive to children's ways of learning and supportive of their adoption of desired morals and beliefs. However, when addressing parenting beliefs and practices directly focused on issues of race and racism, contentions grew and inconsistencies appeared within and across the women's accounts. The narratives that reflected the most consistency across all parenting beliefs and practices regardless of topic were from women whose ideas about race and racism reflected the least alignment with Discourses of White supremacy. These women believed that children learn from the same sources and through the same processes regardless of topic and that the repertoire of parenting strategies used to encourage children's adoption of desired values and beliefs should remain consistent in all situations.

On the other hand, the narratives showing the highest levels of inconsistency between parenting beliefs and practices in general and those applied specifically to issues of race and racism came from women whose ideas about race and racism most strongly aligned with the tenants of White supremacy. In these contexts, women often reversed their previously stated positions on children's learning and approaches to understanding the world. Women whose beliefs aligned with Discourses of White supremacy no longer maintained that children were like sponges, soaking up both explicit and implicit messages about the world from their experiences, from models, and from communication. Instead, assertions were made that – in relation to race and racism – children were entirely unseeing and unhearing. They didn't see race, nor did they see or understand race-based discrimination or inequality. They were entirely blind to race and racism. Believing their own children to be unaware and oblivious to race, and marking their children's ignorance of race as a positive aspect of childhood, parents in this position engaged parenting strategies related to race differently than they did more generally in their parenting. These White parents still maintained, at least to some degree, the belief that personal experiences and adult/peer/media modeling mattered for the adoption of values, but they often eliminated or significantly diminished the use of talk as a strategy

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for communicating their beliefs. Seen as *too* explicit, talk was a strategy some parents intentionally abandoned when engaging in parenting practices related to issues of race and racism.

The narratives suggest that women more closely aligned with Discourses of White supremacy more frequently participate in parenting practices that support and reproduce White supremacy, while women less closely aligned to Discourses of White supremacy are more likely to enact parenting practices that work in ways resistant or counter to Discourses of White supremacy. Overall, Discourses of White supremacy disrupted mothers' general beliefs about child development and parenting strategies and interfered with the strategies' consistent application to all parenting practice, including practices addressing issues of race and racism.

Katie – Embodying and reproducing Discourses of White supremacy

Of the three participants, Katie's narratives most closely reflected Discourses of White supremacy. And her ascription to those ways of being, as unconscious and unintended as they may have been, was evident in her parenting practices. Katie's alignment with the Discourse of color-blindness was apparent with her insistence that she rarely noticed others' race (despite an acute awareness and naming of racial others in her neighborhood, her children's school, her professional spheres, and various regions of her city and nation). She also had a tendency to divert conversations about race or racism to conversations about nationality, ethnicity, religion, economics, gender, sexual orientation, or other categorical markers of identity or group membership, suggesting that she saw talk of race or racism as irrelevant, taboo, socially unacceptable, or an indication of one's own racist nature. By marking racism as a thing of the past or something not part of her immediate context and day-to-day experiences, Katie could claim that race no longer mattered or should no longer matter. And in contexts in which others insisted that race *does* still matter – such as in the situation of affirmative action – Katie suggested that the result has been discrimination against White people for being "too normal." She continued to downplay the power of race and racism in her own life, despite being involved in a race-related lawsuit and having friends of color decline to visit the family's out-of-state home because of racial concerns related to emotional discomfort and fears for their safety in the home's nearly all-White environs.

Many of these same color-blind attitudes were evident in Katie's parenting. Believing that her children did not (and never would) see race, she did not talk with her children about race or racism, believing that to do so would only introduce them to ideas entirely absent from their awareness otherwise. She ignored evidence that her children were already aware of race and considered any race-based distinctions they made to be coincidental. She vehemently advocated that race had no relevancy in the lives of her children – they didn't see it, they didn't make judgments based on it, and it didn't impact their engagement with others. She saw her race-related parental responsibilities as twofold: 1) to (silently) model racial tolerance by not doing anything racist and 2) to support her children's exposure to racially diverse others (in "safe" contexts that reflected a "good" balance of diversity). Even so, she worried that in the future her children might feel like racial minorities, and she sought to equip them with the skills to advocate for themselves and their own identities and values in such contexts.

Katie also adhered to the tenants of meritocracy believing that with enough hard work anyone could accomplish anything. She believed that the only thing inhibiting any child from success would be "negative energy." She suggested that if Black people made better choices – stopped having so many children, stopped turning to drugs and violence, built stronger families, went to school, and other racial stereotypes – that they would be able to pull themselves out of poverty and other destructive contexts. At no point in any of her narratives did she mention or acknowledge that modern lives are impacted by the unchosen contexts of society and history into which they are born. She saw success or failure as entirely dependent on an individual's own choices and actions. As such, Katie decried affirmative action as no longer necessary and a form of oppression against White people, advocating instead that all people should be judged solely on their individual merit. In parenting, Katie saw no societal barriers positioned to interfere with her children's success (which may or may not have been true) but she also saw no barriers in place that would impact the potential of children who are a racial minority, believing that all children will succeed or fail based on their own merits.

The Discourse of accountability evasion was also visible in Katie's narratives. She made a distinct point of noting that her family was not from the South, had never owned slaves, and that she did not associate with such people; in fact, her grandfather had marched for racial equality with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.. She claimed that neither she nor any of her friends were racist or did racist things and made a point of highlighting that she was nice to people of color. Believing that she had done nothing personally or historically that would tie her to the ills of racism, she claimed no additional responsibility for its eradication, other than continuing on as she typically did. In parenting, as long as her children didn't do anything racist, she assumed that they had no other social responsibilities related to race and racism.

And finally, a Discourse of individualism was also present in Katie's narratives. In both her own life and the lives of her children, she placed a premium on individual well-being and self-growth, discussing beliefs and practices that would positively benefit the individual. And while there is nothing intrinsically immoral about these goals, there was no parallel or supplementary discussion of communal belonging, obligation, or responsibility. Katie made no mention of wanting her children to have a sense of community or commitment to something larger than themselves.

Katie's alignment with all four Discourses of White supremacy was fairly high. While believing herself to be a proponent of racial tolerance, many of her beliefs and actions made it more likely that she would allow the perpetuation of racism to continue unnoticed or that she would perpetrate acts of blatant or subtle racism herself. And believing that she was acting appropriately, her actions and (lack of) talk would be highly likely to encourage similarly racist responses and reactions in her children.

Terra – Perched between reproducing and resisting White supremacy

Ideologically, Terra differed from Katie in that, overall, the beliefs and actions she detailed in her narratives were counter to those compliant with White supremacy. First, she believed that context and history play an important role in framing the opportunities and experiences to which one has access. Her own experiences and those of childhood friends showed her ways in which people of equal merit are not always offered equal opportunity as a result of race. In spite of her poor White background living in equally poor Black neighborhoods in Chicago, Terra's White skin allowed her to pass as someone who "belonged" in contexts she would have experienced very differently if she were a person of color. As such, Terra was able to name situations in which the unearned social advantages of Whiteness create an uneven playing field, and she credited this awareness with her resistance to meritocracy. As an advocate of both affirmative action policies and race as a valid factor for school admissions processes, Terra did not see such practices as a detriment to her own child's chances for education, future employment, and the like, but rather one avenue through which to politically recognize the historically-embedded nature of all people and to work to remedy historical inequalities by opening doors for those already disadvantaged by an unfair system. Rather than harming her own daughter's opportunities, Terra felt that affirmative action could make the world a better, more just place for everyone, including her daughter.

Similarly, Terra demonstrated her resistance to the White supremacist Discourse of accountability evasion. She did not feel personally responsible for having caused the racial inequalities in our society, but she felt it appropriate to contribute to their dismantling and saw affirmative action as a venue through which she could show her support. As a social product of and contributor to history herself, she felt she had a role to play in shaping a positive picture of race and racial equality for the future. In her parenting, Terra didn't expect her five year old daughter to go out campaigning racial equality, but did expect her to recognize the broad range of differing experiences individuals carry with them, to know that struggles and successes look and feel different for different populaces, and that people have a responsibility to rectify wrong-doings and work towards fairness, even if they aren't the originators of that unfairness.

And just as Discourses of White supremacy link with one another to create stronger justifications for inequality, so too do Discourses of resistance connect and amplify one another in pursuit of racial justice. Reflecting resistance to a Discourse of individualism,

Terra believed that social location impacts personal experiences and that history plays a role in the distribution of social power. Her awareness of both of these things resulted in and was strengthened by a relational, rather than individualistic, understanding of self. Terra saw herself as one person living within a larger social system, and she saw it as her responsibility to acknowledge others and the ways that their lives impacted her own and vice versa. In her parenting, Terra was very explicit in her desire for Aralyn to understand herself relationally, to see herself as a piece of the larger picture, and to know that all people have a place in that picture and that their actions impact one another. She highlighted these connections for her daughter within the context of their family's typical day-to-day life and sought to foster an environment in which the family's actions and conversations reflected an acknowledgement of their connection to the world around them.

The place in which Terra's resistance to Discourses of White supremacy fumbled was in responding to the Discourse of color-blindness. Terra believed that race is real and has very real consequences in people's lives. She didn't blame racism on non-racial factors, nor think that noticing or talking about race made one racist. Her challenge was in overcoming tenants of color-blindness as related to parenting her own daughter. It came as a revelation to Terra that young children can and do notice racial differences, but she was convinced when her own daughter began making distinctions between people, noting their skin color. Terra was uncertain whether or not children recognize or understand race-based mistreatment or inequality, erring towards the belief that children are too young to see or engage in racism. But she was certain that talking about race – pointing it out – would make a big deal out of something she didn't want to be a big deal. Terra longed for a world where race doesn't matter and she believed that not talking about race with her daughter would demonstrate race's lack of importance. Unfortunately, research tells us that in the absence of explicit dialogue, children are liable to construct their own meanings to explain the racial phenomenon they see and experience in the world around them (Bigler & Liben, 2007; Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Katz, 2003). Adult silence doesn't prevent children from noticing the impact of race in the world, but it does put them in the place of having to make sense of it out on their own. And, being surrounded as we are by a society grounded in White supremacy, children are likely to assume adult silence is compliance with the dominant ideology rather than resistance.

In most ways, Terra's beliefs and actions marked her unwillingness to accept the ways in which White supremacy plays out in our daily culture. She believed that talk is cheap and actions demonstrate where one's true allegiances lie. But, in abandoning the parental strategy of explicit talk as a tool to explain and support values to which she wanted her daughter to adhere, she deprived herself of one primary way to strengthen the possibility of her daughter developing beliefs and practices in defiance of White supremacy.

Corinne – Actively resisting Discourses of White supremacy

Corinne's narratives demonstrated her ideological opposition to the Discourses of White supremacy, and her efforts sought to enact Discourses of resistance in her daily life and in her parenting. Corinne spoke with a passion reflective of her intention to not only avoid enacting the Discourses of White supremacy but to actively counter them to the best of her ability through anti-racist principles and strategies.

Like Terra, Corinne denied the validity of meritocracy, stressing that one's position in the social hierarchy of power and privilege, as well as one's social context, contributes significantly to the opportunities and experiences one has available and the level of success possible through one's hard work alone. She was confident that her children, being White and male, were likely to have few societal limitations imposed upon them externally, but she worried how to best help them recognize their own unearned privilege (racial, gender, and otherwise) and learn to recognize the challenges others would face that they would never encounter as a direct benefit of their privilege. She sought to instill in her children the importance of hard work and determination, but wanted them to understand too that all people are embedded in history such that some goals and desires can be easier or harder to accomplish because of historical circumstances they were born into but didn't cause. Relying heavily on direct, age appropriate dialogue in the context of day-to-day circumstances, Corinne gave the example of talking with her older son about the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. Through children's books, short videos, and lots of dialogue, she explained that people of different skin colors haven't always been treated equally or fairly in our nation and that Dr. King and others worked very hard to change that. While some things have changed, people still aren't always treated fairly, even when everything else about them is equal, except for the color of their skin. Intentionally engaging her children in everyday "teachable moments" as they arose in the context of daily life, Corinne hoped to help develop her children's awareness and attentiveness to issues of fairness, including fairness as related to race and racism. But she also wanted her children to see that her own actions reflected the values she espoused. Through examples such as her support of affirmative action, her work with fair trade, and her openness about occasionally engaging in contentious conversations about race and racism with friends and family, she hoped that her children would see her commitment to racial justice, fairness, and equality. Corinne sought, too, to help her children learn to avoid the pitfalls of entitlement – an embodiment of privilege

she felt led many Whites to perpetuate racism, whether intentionally or not. She connected this concept with her resistance to meritocracy, suggesting that entitlement – as the idea that you deserve something merely because of who you are as an individual – fails to consider who you are within the larger context of past generations and their legacy. Meritocracy functions on the same premise.

Like Terra, Corinne's opposition to the racist Discourses of accountability evasion and individualism were closely linked. She was strongly committed to the importance of understanding one's self relationally – as part of a community, as part of history, and with a responsibility to both. She firmly believed in the power of community as a path for dismantling inequality. From her perspective, societal success and individual success had a cooperative relationship. Unlike the current system of power in which unearned privileges are distributed unequally and unfairly, she believed that when all people are equal players in society, everyone benefits from equal opportunity, equal access, and the capacity to build rich relationships unhindered by unequal power dynamics. Dismantling inequality would revolutionize day-to-day interactions, but to do so, Corinne believed that Whites must take responsibility for the history of racism and racial inequality in our past (and present-day) and individuals must understand that they are not islands, but socially born, embedded, and responsible. Corinne relied on conversation to share and reiterate these values with her children, but she placed high expectations on herself to intentionally and openly model her values for her children to observe, to question, and from which to learn. She talked deliberately with her children about having responsibilities to one's self, one's family, and to one's larger community, and she sought to instill in them a sense of obligation to something greater than themselves, to know that their successes build on the successes of those who came before them. Similarly, when they recognize the legacy of past generations' failures – including the construction and perpetuation of racism – they have a responsibility to disrupt the cycle of wrongdoing, to seek to live their own lives differently and more positively, and as much as possible, to enable and support others' similar efforts to resist racism.

Corinne was also resistant to the Discourse of color-blindness, blatantly denouncing the approach for its racist foundations. She believed that, regardless of personal or social desire to the contrary, race continues to matter and that we are still far from being a post-race society. In addition, she was unique among the study participants in believing that children are able to distinguish racial differences among people *and* can engage in

racist (and anti-racist) action. Whether or not their intentions were to be hateful, Corinne could name instances during which children, including her own, had called others racially charged names, had taken action based on racial stereotypes, and had made assumptions about others as a result of their racial identity (often reproducing racist speech or action they had observed in others and assumed to be socially acceptable). For Corinne, these situations were evidence that children, as well as adults, are racial beings engaged in racially charged contexts. In addition, the examples marked the idea of color-blindness as both absurd and destructive in its efforts to mask racism. The only evidence that color-blindness may still be present in some of Corinne's thinking was her preference for self-identifying geographically and culturally, as Southern, Mountain, or Appalachian, rather than racially as White. Even so, she did not use these alternate identifies to erase or deny her Whiteness, and in conversations targeting issues of race, she addressed her own Whiteness directly, making no linguistic moves to divert conversation or to blame racism on non-racial issues.

Corinne was unique among the study participants in the consistency with which she applied her parenting beliefs and strategies across the whole of her parenting. While the other mothers' narratives demonstrated shifts away from their general parenting practices when addressing issues of race or racism, Corinne's practices remained steadfast – seeking to model values to her children through her own life, working to foster experiences and opportunities to fortify desired values, and utilizing the power of explicit conversation to engage her children in dialogue around socially contentious issues in efforts to guide their understanding. The other mothers' deviated from their overarching philosophy of parenting when addressing race and racism by intentionally suspending dialogue as a viable and valued parenting strategy. The mothers' narratives demonstrated efforts to rationalize the inconsistencies. Often, their parenting choices felt right or common sense (a feeling that supports White supremacy and allows racist systems to remain intact), but the mothers often fumbled when trying to explain the reasons supporting their conversational silence around topics of race with their children. While Corinne had questions and concerns about parenting most effectively, her narratives showed no inconsistencies about the parenting strategies she sought to employ in any parenting situation, nor any inconsistencies between her talk about her parenting beliefs and her talk about her actual parenting actions. She approached parenting around issues of race and racism in the

same way she approached parenting in general — a trait absent from the other two mothers' accounts.

Envisioning the transformation of White parenting into a site of resistance to White supremacy

What united the participants' narratives was that all of the accounts detailed the beliefs and perspectives of well-meaning White, middle-class parents who saw themselves as progressive thinkers supportive of racial tolerance. All of the mothers believed that racism is real, and they denounced it as both dangerous and destructive. They also sought to have their lives and the lives of their children support the virtues of tolerance and equality. Discovering situations and contexts in which their words and actions, or those of their children, have perpetuated or enabled racism would likely be distressing, and realizing ways in which their parenting practices have actively enabled the persistence of racism would likely be painfully upsetting. While the study demonstrated many of the ways that White supremacy is frequently reproduced through the processes of White, middle-class parenting, it also offered suggestions and examples for transforming parenting into a site of resistance and activism against racism, rather than a collaborator in its perpetuation.

The White, middle-class parents in this study were a population on the brink. They stated a desire to live the values of racial equality, but were often blind to their own entrenchment in racist systems that function to keep them naïve to its full depth and breadth. And yet, as well-intentioned, race-progressive Whites, they were positioned as an important link in the battle to dismantle White supremacy. With greater awareness of the ways White supremacy is enacted in the everyday lives of mainstream people, these White parents "on the brink," as it were, would be placed in the position of making a decision – either to continue on as normal, knowledgeably colluding with the perpetuation of racism, or to make changes to their everyday beliefs and practices in ways that would make them less likely to reproduce racism.

Perhaps the greatest misconception held among some of the mothers in this study was the idea that parental inaction – doing or saying nothing – in relation to issues of race and racism would positively contribute to the eradication of racism and prevent children from developing biased or discriminatory beliefs or practices. Such a stance relies upon two faulty assumptions. First that children's natural tendency is towards racial tolerance and social equality, and second that the contexts in which we live our daily lives provide a neutral foundation for developing beliefs around issues of race and racism. What research shows is that children's natural tendency, rather than towards specific

values like racial tolerance, is towards adapting to the environment in which they live (Grusec & Davidov, 2007), and in our society, that environment is racially biased.

Embedded in our complex and racially charged social environment, children are acutely attuned to the attitudes and practices they see around them expressed by family, peers, their community, the media, and so forth (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Grusec & Hastings, 2007). In a world dominated by White supremacy and predisposed towards racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Tatum, 1997), they are bound to see and hear racism at work in blatant, subtle, personal, and institutional ways (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; Katz, 2003; Lewis, 2003; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Children are born into a society whose foundations are fundamentally racist. If they grow to mirror the dominant race-based attitudes and practices already at work around them, they will grow to reproduce racism. Tatum (1997) said, "Because racism is so engrained in the fabric of American institutions, it is easily self-perpetuating. All that is required to maintain it is business as usual" (p. 11).

Parenting that does not adopt an actively and explicitly anti-racist tact fails to disrupt racism and will, instead, contribute to its reproduction. Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) offered a valuable analogy for understanding the role of individuals in perpetuating or disrupting White supremacy. She wrote:

> I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of White supremacy and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. Some of the bystanders may feel the motion of the conveyor belt, see the active racists ahead of them, and choose to turn around, unwilling to go to the same destination as the White supremacists. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt – unless they are actively antiracist – they will find themselves carried along with the others. (p. 11-12)

None of the women in this study believed themselves to be active supporters of racism. They were not White supremacists. But within their narratives were numerous examples of the ways Discourses of White supremacy manifest in passive expressions of

racism (and occasionally active expressions of racism as well). The ideological beliefs exhibited in Katie's accounts, for example, demonstrated the greatest level of passive racism. With personal beliefs and parenting practices that demonstrated an ascription to Discourses of color-blindness, meritocracy, accountability evasion, and individualism, those with perspectives similar to Katie's are the equivalent of people standing still on Tatum's moving walkway of White supremacy. Those like Katie may not do anything blatantly or intentionally racist, but their attitudes and behaviors do nothing to disrupt the racist systems already in place. Their passivity is far from neutral in effect, functioning instead to preserve the racist status quo. Passivity can be understood as complicit in perpetuating racism. Folks in this position may not be running towards racism, but by standing still, they arrive there nonetheless. "When we fail to intercede, to do something different, we allow (if not enable) racist outcomes to be reproduced unchecked" (Lewis, 2003, p. 192).

Terra's perspectives seemed to mark her as someone stuck between passive racism and active anti-racism. Her beliefs defied the tenants of White supremacy, but some of her actions allowed them to remain unchallenged. Believing that adults' core values and attitudes don't change, Terra rarely confronted expressions of racism displayed by friends, family, or peers, even when the situation involved her directly (for example, crossing the street with her friend and their children to avoid Black men). Similarly, intentionally avoiding talk of race and racism with her daughter diminished the power of anti-racist messages Terra may have intended to convey in her parenting. In Tatum's analogy, I would liken those with perspectives similar to Terra's to White people who recognize the motion of the walkway, do not approve of the destination, and turn themselves away from the forward motion. And yet, the disjuncture between their anti-racist beliefs and their not-quite anti-racist actions fails to move them in the opposite direction. While facing away from intentional racism, people in this position are still moving along the conveyor belt in a direction and speed that perpetuates White supremacy.

Narratives like Corinne's provide perhaps the most hope in the broad landscape of White, middle-class parenting. Like Terra, her attitudes reflected a resistance to Discourses of color-blindness, meritocracy, accountability evasion, and individualism, but Corinne's narratives also reflected an intentionality and determination to actively act in ways counter to the ideology of White supremacy. In both her personal beliefs and attitudes and those demonstrated in her parenting, Corinne was trying to take action in

opposition to White supremacy. Despite fumbles and occasional failures, she was endeavoring to actively engage Discourses of resistance to White supremacy. Rather then perpetuate color-blindness, she strove towards an acknowledgement of racism's powerful presence in everyday life and its consequences for everyday people and she sought to deepen and extend her own racial awareness. Rather than abide by meritocracy and its denial of individuals' social and historical embeddedness, Corinne drove towards an understanding of racism that was personal and institutional, seeing individuals as carriers and manifestations of larger social stories. In defying the Discourse of accountability evasion, Corinne endeavored to recognize the relational nature of human life and acknowledge the role of history in shaping modern experiences. As such, she cultivated a sense of responsibility and accountability for social realities larger than her personal intentions or actions. And in response to the social push to focus on individualism, Corinne's attitudes and practices reflected strong support for the strength, health, growth, and prosperity of the larger community, rather than of the self in isolation. Advocating communal accountability and relational prosperity, Corinne's perspectives marked individuals as inextricable from their larger social contexts.

Corinne's daily practices stood in defiance of the ideology of White supremacy and attempted to enact alternative Discourses of engagement in our racially charged world. What set an account like Corinne's apart from other, and perhaps more common, accounts of White, middle-class parenting was the intentionality with which she applied a resistance to racism and White supremacy to her parenting practices. Believing in children's capacity to engage the world in both racist and anti-racist ways, Corinne applied all the strategies she used to resist racism in her own daily life to resist racism in her parenting. Offering age-appropriate, contextualized approaches for resisting racism, Corinne endeavored to raise children equipped to walk in opposition to White supremacy. Corinne, like all people, was not perfect and remained embedded in a society dominated by the ideology of White supremacy. Individuals, their backgrounds, and their everyday experiences are reflective of the larger social structures, ideologies, and racist social histories in which they are embedded. But defiance is possible. Efforts to resist, to rebel, to change do not always succeed. White people lapse back into old patterns, fail to recognize the benefits of their racial privilege, and make mistakes. Tatum (1997) suggested that, "The relevant question is not whether all Whites are racist, but how we can

move more White people from a position of active or passive racism to one of active antiracism?" (p. 12)

On a continuum of "more racist" to "less racist" (Trepagnier, 2006), how can we encourage the movement of White, middle-class parents – particularly those "on the brink" – towards increasingly less racist beliefs and actions? The pursuit of Discourses resistant to White supremacy offers one suggestion. Recognizing, too, that neutrality is not an option in parenting around issues of race and racism makes a difference. Silence and inaction do not encourage a resistance to White supremacy; rather they allow White supremacy to reproduce.

DISCUSSION

ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

This study sought to improve understanding of White, middle-class parenting beliefs and practices around issues of race and racism and to identify the role of larger racial ideologies within parenting practices for the purpose of delineating the contributions those parenting practices make to either the perpetuation or disruption of White supremacy.

When considering their overall perspectives and beliefs on parenting, study participants sought parenting practices that felt "right" and discussed three key categories of parental intentions – character traits they hoped their children grew to embody, the experientially and socially diverse contexts they hoped their children would engage, and their intention to raise children accepting of all people. The reasons the mothers gave for their hopes were frequently explained from either an individualistically-oriented perspective in which the achievement of these parenting goals would result in the accruement of personal benefit for the children or a relationally-oriented perspectives in which the achievement of these parenting goals would be mutually beneficial for both the children and the larger community to which they belonged. While both perspectives were present to some degree in all parental narratives, parents tended to preference one standpoint over the other, and those proclivities were closely related to larger societal Discourses of either individualism or community. Those more oriented to an individualistic mindset were proponents of interpersonal tolerance, but those more relationally-oriented shifted the conversation from issues of tolerance to issues of fairness, justice, and equality. While tolerance connotes a willingness to endure or put up with difference, justice moves beyond merely allowing differences to coexist to actively pursuing equal and fair opportunity and treatment for all. While tolerance makes note of the existence of differing people, justice recognizes the relationships *between* differing people. And in their narratives, mothers who consciously considered and regularly took into account the consequences of their parenting for a diverse range of people were fairly consistent in reflecting a Discourse of community rather than one of individualism.

Building on the beliefs that children are active participants in their own learning and that they learn through both the explicit and implicit messages conveyed by their experiences, parents believed that they had an important role to play in supporting their children's learning. In describing their overall parenting actions and practices, White

mothers believed that their parenting actions should reflect their parenting values. As such, they sought to consistently utilize three primary categories of parenting strategies aligned with children's modes of learning: familial modeling, direct verbal communication, and shaping children's life experiences by enabling or restricting children's access to relevant materials and experiences. These perspectives – consistent across all parent participants – offered a baseline for understanding White, middle-class parenting practices and approaches in general and created a dataset against which more topic-specific, White, middle-class parenting strategies could be compared.

As parent participants discussed their perspectives and beliefs on race and racism and those beliefs' relationships to their beliefs about parenting, contentions and discrepancies within and across their narratives were far more common than unanimity. Through the discussion of their own practical experiences and convictions, evidence of theoretical Discourses in support of or in resistance to White supremacy emerged. White women's individual perspectives and beliefs about race and racism seemed to have a relationship to their beliefs about children and race. Key disputes arose around the developmental topic of whether or not young children "see" race and understand racism and around sentiments concerning children's engagement in our racialized world – whether they are removed from it, observers of it, or actors within it.

Narrative patterns suggested that women who denied children's awareness of race and/or racism – rejecting that children have the capacity to identify racial differences and to recognize or contribute to racist actions – and who believed that children are removed from or observers of the racialized world around them also showed a tendency to embody a specific set of personal beliefs about race and racism. They tended to see their own Whiteness as primarily a societal disadvantage, to explain their racial status as a "good" White person as inherited or already accomplished, to understand racism narrowly – as primarily blatant acts between individuals and as a dichotomous label of "racist" or "not racist" – and to believe that hard work is the sole contributor to an individual's success. Alternatively, women who believed that even young children notice racial differences and are racial beings aware of and capable of committing acts of racism and anti-racism expressed concern that without intervention children will perpetuate racist ideas and actions (if they haven't already). Women with such beliefs about children and race tended to also see their own Whiteness as an unearned social advantage and to understand the racial ascription of being a "good"

White person as a lifelong and continually proven personal journey. In addition, they were apt to understood racism broadly – as both blatant and subtle, personal and institutional, and existing along an unbounded continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist." Furthermore, they were inclined to believe that hard work is only one contributing factor in the success of individuals as socially embedded beings.

Individuals' embodiment of these two divergent points of view was in no way absolute, but rather multifaceted and somewhat flexible. In addition, the women's accounts reflected the possibility of attitudinal shifts over time; what they believed years ago was not necessarily what they believed today. Even so, each participant tended to gravitate with fairly certain consistency towards one general set of beliefs or the other. And each set of values also correlated with a larger set of Discourses in support of or in resistance to the socially dominant ideology of White supremacy.

The White mothers' narratives demonstrated clear relationships between their beliefs and practices about parenting and race and larger Discourses and ideologies in society that serve to perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality. Discourses that allowed the perpetuation of White supremacy were evident in the narratives of those who shared a range of common beliefs grounded in their daily experiences. The denial of race's relevance in their own personal lives, the practice of deferring to discussions of alternative identity markers (ethnicity, geography, culture, etc.) rather than addressing issues of race directly, and the rejection of children's capacity to identify racial differences reflected a Discourse of color-blindness. An advocacy of hard work as the single contributing factor to personal success demonstrated a Discourse of meritocracy. A Discourse of accountability evasion was exhibited in the suggestion that Whites are entitled to their social position and in the rejection of the idea that White people have any responsibility for racism or its consequences – historically or modern-day. And a Discourse of individualism was manifest in the framing of Whites and people of color as in a competitive "you *versus* me" pairing (rather than a collaborative "you *and* me" pairing), as well as in a general focus on the accumulation of personal advantages with little or no mention of larger social responsibility.

Alternatively, some White women's narratives expressed counter-Discourses situated to disrupt the maintenance of White supremacy. Common convictions that all people, including children, are aware of racial differences and that race has consequences for all people in our modern world demonstrated resistance to a Discourse

of color-blindness. Clear resistance to a Discourse of meritocracy was evident in the certainty that hard work contributes to personal success but that more complex social, cultural, and historical factors also play a powerful role. Resistance to a Discourse of accountability evasion was evident in women's conviction that, while they may not have been the originators of racism nor intended to perpetuate it, they have a responsibility to try to limit the ways in which they take advantage of the privileges resulting from their Whiteness and to actively work to end racism and its unjust consequences. And a general inclination towards communal responsibility and relational growth and prosperity rather than a focus on individual success and well-being without consideration for others demonstrated a resistance to a Discourse of individualism. As such, strong relationships existed between participants' perspectives and beliefs about race and racism, their perspectives and beliefs about children's relationship to issues of race and racism, and larger societal Discourses supportive of or resistant to White supremacy.

The same correlations could also be seen in the participants' description of their parenting actions and practices directly and indirectly concerning issues of race and racism with their children. Discord manifested across the narratives concerning the identification of appropriate parenting strategies when addressing issues of race and racism. Mothers who generally expressed perspectives in resistance to the maintenance of White supremacy typically enacted the same parenting strategies around issues of race and racism as they did in their general parenting. However, when addressing issues of race and racism, White mothers complicit with White supremacy often engaged parenting practices in direct violation of those they relied upon in their general parenting. This finding is vital for understanding the ways in which White supremacy interferes in the parenting of White children for racial equality.

When discussing their parenting actions and practices specifically concerning to issues of race and racism, clear delineations emerged between those who adhered to Discourses of White supremacy and those who resisted. All study participants placed emphasis upon three strategic categories of parental action when discussing parenting in general: 1) engaging their children in direct, explicit conversations that stressed specific valued beliefs and the reasons for their importance, 2) fostering experiences and contexts reflective of their values and beliefs, and 3) modeling specific attitudes and value systems through their own behaviors and actions. In considering their parenting actions around issues of race and racism, parents expressing a commitment to Discourses that resisted

racism continued to engage these same parenting strategies when addressing issues of race and racism in their parenting – talking honestly and openly with their children about race and racism in age appropriate, contextualized ways; giving consideration to the race-related messages being offered, explicitly and implicitly, about race through their children's material and social contexts; and using their own day-to-day lives as models for their children's emulation concerning issues of race and racism.

White parents whose attitudes and behaviors demonstrated a general adherence to Discourses of White supremacy, however, engaged parenting differently when related to issues of race and racism than when parenting more generally. The socially-embedded and learned ideology of White supremacy interfered with the mothers' transference of beliefs and actions related to parenting in general to their parenting around issues of race and racism. The generally applied parenting practices mothers had found most consistently successful for supporting their children's adoption of specific values and ideas were abandoned when it came to parenting around issues of race and racism. Rather than talking explicitly and openly with their children about issues of race, as they did with other topics, these parents were silent and often made the intentional choice *not* to engage their children in conversations in which race would be a factor. As much as possible these parents avoided race-related talk with their children. Many of these White mothers still expressed a belief that experiences matter and tended to express a desire that racial diversity be a part of their children's lives, but they were cautious that there not be "too much" diversity or the "wrong kind" of diversity. In addition, there was little to no mention of the role of material goods and media products for shaping children's ideas about race and racism, and no mention of efforts to counteract negative or hurtful messages. And while they still strongly advocated that parents are models of values to their children, including race-related values, parents in this group typically held a limited definition of racism that prevented them from recognizing their own racist actions, including, for example, utilizing racist stereotypes and avoiding people of color. Similarly, parents occasionally recognized a racist attitude or action within their child's immediate experience but chose not to say or do anything in response because they assumed their children wouldn't notice or wouldn't understand.

All the of participants in the study were well-intentioned, expressing heartfelt desires to raise children who do not engage in racism and holding themselves as adults to a similar expectation. But for mothers who adhered to Discourses of White supremacy,

intentionally or unintentionally, elements of their parenting – as expressed in their own narratives – were reflective of beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and actions either complicit with racism or expressly racist themselves. Findings suggested that White, middle-class parents who unintentionally (or intentionally) support the perpetuation of White supremacy through their attitudes and acts are more common than those utilizing parenting as a site of resistance to White supremacy. Allowing the reproduction of racism is far easier for White parents than disrupting it, as racism is the status quo (Tatum, 1997) and White people are unjustly advantaged by it. Some parents falsely believed that as long as they didn't do anything racist that they would be contributing positively to the eradication of racism. Unfortunately, such a perspective fails to take into account the racially biased norm in which we all live. Doing nothing is quiet collusion with racism. Maureen Reddy (1996b) wrote, "Every choice we make as mothers is made within a political context and has political implications" (p. 244). Neutrality is not an option. Silence reflects complicity. Only families intentionally seeking and engaging anti-racist strategies and practices even have the potential to raise children in a way truly counter to our racist status quo. Such an intention is a difficult path to navigate, fraught with wrong turns and failures.

Parents are not the be-all and end-all in the process of their children's racial socialization, but they are a large contributing factor and typically lay the early foundations upon which their children will build or battle as they mature. This study's findings make clear that without drastic change, White, middle-class parents, as well-intentioned as they might be, are likely to have little role in the dismantling of racism in our culture. They are far more likely to perpetuate White supremacy, unintentionally but effectively nonetheless. Even so, the situation is by no means hopeless.

RETHINKING WHITE PARENTING: POSITIONING PARENTING AS A SITE OF RESISTANCE TO WHITE SUPREMACY

Comparing the often diverse perspectives and experiences of White, middle-class mothers allowed for the highlighting of parental beliefs and attitudes most often aligned with efforts to enact anti-racist strategies in parenting practices and suggested several key fault lines along which gains supporting racial equality might be made. Parents were more likely to enact anti-racist parenting practices when they also expressed four key perspectives: 1) a broad understanding of the meaning and manifestations of racism, 2) an intention to "expose" their children to the world in ways that pursued actions beneficial to all people rather than beneficial to only some and detrimental to others, 3) a goal to "protect" their children from being ignorant about racism and its consequences, rather than protecting them against knowledge of racism itself, and 4) an understanding of children as racial beings with a developing, but active, awareness of race and the capacity to engage both racist and anti-racist attitudes and actions. In these ways, the process of rethinking White, middle-class parenting has the potential to disrupt White supremacy and the social Discourses that perpetuate and reproduce it.

Rethinking "racism"

Women with deeper and broader understandings of the concept of racism were more likely to identify its many manifestations both theoretically and in their daily lives, were more likely to acknowledge the presence and consequences of racism in their own lives and in the lives of others, and were better able to identify and address their own racist attitudes or actions. A broad understanding of racism rested on four general tenants — first, a recognition of racism's personal and institutional nature; second, an acknowledgement of racism's blatant and subtle manifestations; third, a willingness to see racism as an unbound continuum ranging from "more racist" to "less racist," rather than a finitely bound dichotomy of "racist" or "not racist;" and fourth, an acknowledgement of the connection between racism and social power.

Recognizing that both individuals and societal structures can perpetuate acts of racism shifted participants' fundamental ways of conceptualizing racism — integrating into their basic notion of racism the import role of history for framing societal structures and norms. Recognizing and understanding institutional manifestations of racism solidified the idea that society itself is not a neutral player in the social struggle around racism. All people are born into a biased society built to privilege Whites and disadvantage all others. Identifying racism as both personal and institutional removed it from the realm of interpersonal conflicts alone and marked it as a society-wide problem bigger than any two people (but still frequently manifested between individuals).

Accepting that racism has both blatant and subtle manifestations shifted the cultural assumption that racism is always direct, intentional, and hostile and opened up the possibility that it can be many other things — indirect, unintentional, and well-meaning, for example. Broadening the understanding of how racism is manifested makes it possible to understand more clearly how it is perpetuated. When it becomes apparent that even subtle acts of racism contribute significantly to the reproduction of racism, perhaps even more so than blatant acts, it shifts individuals' understanding of and approach to "not being racist."

Similarly, when racism is no longer seen as a clear-cut dichotomy between what is racist and what is not racist, change can be understood by degree rather than as an absolute. Progress can be marked in growth or change over time, rather than being fixed. Ending racism becomes understood as a journey with many mile markers along the way. Individuals and society as a whole can always become more or less racist. As such,

there is no room for passivity. No longer defined by a permanent label of "racist" or "not racist," all people must continually prove their commitment to either perpetuating or disrupting racism. And there is always the renewed opportunity to move either way on the continuum – closer or further away from an anti-racist perspective committed to dismantling racism.

And finally, when racism is understood as related to the distribution of tangible, consequential social power capable of unfairly benefiting some and unjustly depriving others, it becomes harder to dismiss as something of the past or something with no significance for contemporary lives. Issues of social power give racism relevance for all people as a result of its role in the unequal distribution of social privilege, control, access, and advantage.

The more broadly mothers conceptualized racism, the more attentive they were as well to issues of race and racism in their parenting. Those who saw racism as both personal and structural, both blatant and subtle, as a continuum ranging from more to less racist, and directly tied to the unfair allocation of social power were also those most resistant to the ideology of White supremacy.

Rethinking "exposure"

The concept of "exposure" was key within the narratives of this study. All of the mothers spoke of the value they placed upon "exposing" their children to the world – diverse people, a broad scope of activities and opportunities, and a worldview of approaching life and its many offerings openly and enthusiastically. Where the women differed was in the connotations they applied to the word "exposure" and its meaning relative to human relationships. In some stories, "exposure" dealt with contact – being able to say that you've been to the beach and to the mountains, that you've tried playing the trumpet, or that you've met a Muslim. This form of exposure dealt with introductory engagements, skimming the surface but not necessarily involving one's self any deeper. When the concept of exposure was applied to engaging with people different than one's self, three significant distinctions became clear through the women's narratives. First, the concept of exposure to human diversity was often tied to the accumulation of personal benefits. Second, it was often linked with preconceived ideas about what constituted a "good mix" of diversity, both in terms of the desired identity of those marked as diverse and the overall percentage of those not of the White, middle-class hegemonic norm. And third, a desire for children to be "exposed" to a broad range of human diversity was in no way synonymous with an investment in equality.

Exposure to diversity is highly valued by White, middle-class communities in part because parents have a desire to groom well-rounded tolerant children with the capacity to engage successfully across lines of difference (Reay et al., 2008, p. 242). Their commitment to tolerance is motivated in part by self-interest, knowing that exposure to difference increases one's own cultural capital. Reay and her colleagues (2007) wrote:

> Tolerance, understanding and proximity are all valorized as positive, and clearly there is much to be commended in white middle-class practices of [engaging] your child [in] multi-ethnic urban [contexts], but such practices are also motivated by self-interest as well as more selfless civic motives.... The global economy requires individuals who can deal with people of other races and nationalities openly and respectfully. So within the professional social fields these parents inhabit as workers, multiculturalism is increasingly a source of cultural and social capital. (p. 1046)

As such, a commitment to racial diversity typically includes a recognition of the benefits such engagement provides for White, middle-class children (Reay et al., 2008, p. 244).

In their narratives, Corinne, Katie, and Terra all acknowledged and valued the personal benefits exposure to diversity offered for their children's possible futures. Like the parents in the work of Diane Reay and her colleagues (Crozier et al., 2008; Reay et al., 2007; Reay et al., 2008), Corinne, Katie, and Terra were keenly aware of the ways that exposure could provide their children with communication skills, social and cultural fluency, and comfort engaging with others across lines of difference.

Even so, this commitment to exposing children to racial diversity came with caveats. Reay and her colleagues have shown that for White, middle-class parents "the gains of social mix only are seen to work if there is a majority of white and/or middle-class [peers]" (Reay et al., 2007, p. 1050). In these cases, the desire for "exposure" is only valuable when the mix of people includes a critical mass of like-identified peers. In Bridget Bryne's work with White, middle-class mothers on the south side of London, she identified that:

> Difference was on the one hand desired, but it also needed to be restrained. The 'mix' must be 'good' and not 'too much' or 'not enough.' The suggestion here is that whilst some cultural difference offered enlivenment and enrichment to children's lives, there still needed to be 'enough' (or a majority) of the classed and racialized norm to ensure its reproduction in children. (2006a, p. 1015)

Parents seemed to perceive having the "wrong mix" as a potential threat to their children's appropriate development as racialized, classed persons.

This concern over having a "good mix" of diversity was also present in the narratives of Corinne, Katie, and Terra. Katie expressed an explicit worry that her children might not develop knowledge of and pride for their own identity if surrounded by too much diversity. She herself felt outnumbered and threatened by the percentage of racial others in her contexts, and while she didn't express concern that the children might feel similarly, she did talk about working to equip her children to be strong and self-assured when surrounded by diversity. Terra also mentioned a concern that her daughter not feel like a racial minority, as she had as a White child in a context populated almost entirely by people of color. However, Terra felt that Aralyn's contexts were nowhere close to having "too much" diversity. Terra and Corinne both expressed the explicit desire for *more* racial diversity in the lives of their children, even though their contexts already presented the same or more racial diversity than Katie's.

Crozier and colleagues (2008) highlighted an important contention in White, middle-class parents' beliefs about exposure, writing that "[w]hilst they want their children to have understanding of 'diverse experiences,' they do not seem to want them to engage with or embrace that diversity" (p. 271). Reay and her peers (2008) added, "The aim is not to befriend and mix as equals… but rather to know them in appropriating ways that resource the self" (p. 245). Their work demonstrated that a desire for "exposure" was in no way synonymous with an investment in equality or an interest in building rich relationships between equals.

While their research conclusions hold true for Whites like Katie who placed a high priority on individualism and nurturing contexts and experiences beneficial to one's own self-interests, the narratives of Terra and Corinne, to differing degrees, offered ways in which some White mothers engaged "exposure" differently. Terra and Corinne both embraced a relational understanding self, wanting their children to acknowledge the connections between themselves and others and for them to foster deep, meaningful relationships with others, including non-White others. Having had meaningful cross-race relationships and friendships themselves, they recognized the ways that those engagements broadened their awareness of social inequality and their desire for change that benefited others as well as themselves. Corinne's narratives in particular spoke to a desire that "exposure" be about mutual growth, communally shared benefits, and a shared commitment to break down barriers hindering the achievement of equality.

The more earnestly White, middle-class mothers envisioned exposure to human diversity as an endeavor that should benefit all people, rather than just those who already receive social privilege as a result of their race, and the more mothers' beliefs and practices reflected a commitment to a socially embedded, relational understanding of self, the more attentive they were to actively dismantling racism in their lives and in their parenting.

Rethinking "protection"

"Protection" is a complicated concept in parenting. All the mothers in this study, and most parents I've met in my life, want to protect their children – to keep them safe and to guard them from harm. Sometimes that task is clearly defined. Parents want to protect their children from oncoming traffic, from illness or disease, from unnecessary struggle, and the like. But other times, the concept of protection is far more murky. In the context of race and racism, parental "protection" can take on numerous forms, such that adults' ideas of *who* they are protecting, *what* they are being protected from, and *for what purpose* they seek to provide protection shift their parenting intentions and practices.

Some parents seek to protect their children from knowledge of race and racism altogether, desiring to spare them the pain and discomfort of its history, present-day reality, and the resulting social ramifications. (Obviously, this is an option only truly available to White families, as "whiteness confers the great privilege of ignoring race whenever one wishes" (Reddy, 1996b, p. 253).) Katie's narrative exemplified this White perspective of protection. She saw race and racism as hurtful, uncomfortable, pain-filled social phenomena and sought to protect her children from knowledge of their existence, negativity, and sadness. For her, protection was about guarding her children from things that would mark their world as filled with anything other than sunshine, harmony, happiness, and innocence. If given the option, she spoke of a desire that her children never gain knowledge of race or racism, never learn its history, and never contemplate their role in its complicated story. To Katie, part of parenting was intentionally shielding children from the evils of the world and working to preserve the lighthearted purity of childhood for as long as possible. As a result, her parenting practices reflected an ambition to "protect" her children from knowledge of race and racism by never bringing it up, never addressing it when it did come up, and ignoring its presences in the lives of her children. Anti-bias educator Mary Pat Martin explained that "[Many people] don't see any reason to talk about diversity with their children (e.g., 'Why raise issues where there aren't any?' 'Don't make waves.')…. They want to keep their children 'protected' from having to know about prejudice and discrimination at such a young age" (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006, p. 67).

While wanting to protect children from hardship is an understandable desire, in this context doing so positions children such that they are almost certain to perpetuate the racist status quo of inequality. They can't change something about which they are

uninformed or have no clear understanding. Parental protection that intentionally inhibits children's knowledge of race and racism denies children the opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance about their experiences and ignores children's embeddedness in a society that offers them constant messages about race and racism, even if their families wish it didn't. "Protecting" children by refusing to address issues of race prevents parents' from framing or guiding children's understanding of race and offers them few, if any, tools for engaging race and racism in any way other than the hegemonic racist norm.

But a view of protection similar to Katie's is not the only parental perspective on "protection" from which to address parenting around issues of race and racism. Parents who "protect" their children by restricting their access to knowledge of race and racism do so with the intention to shield their children from emotional sadness, turmoil, or struggle. Some parents seek instead to protect their children from *ignorance* about race and racism and feel that the best way to protect children is to offer them as many tools and as much guidance as possible to see the world as it truly is and to engage in it responsibly. Corinne, for example, exhibited this alternative approach to protection. Like Katie, she wanted to keep her children safe and healthy and happy. She also felt that hiding the realities of our nation's racial history, the many resulting conflicts, and the consequences for contemporary lives would jeopardize her children's chances for authentic, self-actualized safety, health, and happiness in the future.

This approach doesn't seek to burden children with a debilitating sense of personal responsibility, shame, or guilt, but attempts to honestly present the world in which they live and to address their questions or experiences honestly and openly. The intent to protect children from *knowledge* of racism is grounded in the false hope of preventing them from experiencing negativity. Protecting children from racial *ignorance* acknowledges the negativity and inevitability of racism in our world and endeavors to prevent children from contributing to its perpetuation. With the goal of protecting children from ignorance, there is a hard awareness that with knowledge of racism comes struggle – questions, confusion, sadness, anger, anxiety, and so forth – but that struggle is seen as in the service of positive racial change and personal growth. When adults respect children enough to acknowledge their developing awareness of race and racism and offer support to make sense of the inequality they already see in the world around them, children are better positioned to make active choices about their engagement in the perpetuation or disruption of racist attitudes and actions. When asked, "*Who* are you protecting?" those

trying to shield against *knowledge* of race and racism are trying to protect individuals; those trying to protect against *ignorance* are trying to protect the larger community of which they are a part. To protect against ignorance strives to defend the whole community from reproducing the cycles of hate, hurt, and division that coincide with White supremacy.

Within Corinne, Katie, and Terra's narratives, the more a woman spoke about protection as an effort to protect society, including themselves, from the evils of racism, rather than an effort to protect children from knowledge of racism itself, the more attentive they were to actively dismantling racism in their lives and in their parenting.

Rethinking knowledge about child development as it pertains to race and racism

Child development is often an area of knowledge parents learn through the process of parenting itself. As with the examples of Corinne, Katie, and Terra, they gain knowledge about how to be a parent and what to expect in the growth and development of their children through a myriad of channels – personal experience, family, friends, community members (including doctors and teachers), the media, and so forth. For White families the commonsense assumption from most of these sources and often from their own instincts is that young children have little or no awareness of race or racism (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006). Actual research about children's awareness of race and racism and their capacity for reproducing racism demonstrates a strikingly different reality. Children do notice and distinguish between racial differences as early as six months of age (Katz, 2003), and even young children are able to engage in racist attitudes and actions (Lewis, 2003; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Children are just as embedded and engaged in our racially charged society as adults.

Three key areas of knowledge in the realm of child development seem particularly relevant in the examination of parenting practices that either perpetuate or disrupt systems of racial inequality. Adults' knowledge of child development as it relates, first, to children's racial awareness, second, to children's awareness of racism and their capacity for engaging in the world as racial beings, and third, to children's identity as active learners in their own lives seems to be connected with adults' approach to parenting around issues of race and racism.

As highlighted in the individual case studies, parents alert to children's ability to see racial differences spoke more often of acknowledging children's racial observations and engaging them in open conversation about racial differences. Those who denied that children, including their own, have the ability to see race avoided all related conversations with their children and ignored instances in which their children's comments or actions suggested the possibility that such a conversation would be warranted, valued, or meaningful. Similarly, parents who accepted that children are racial beings capable of engaging in the world in both racist and anti-racist ways were more intentional about applying their parenting practices – particularly conversation, parental modeling, and fostering environmental contexts – in ways that sought to support anti-racist behavior and attitudes in their children. Those who denied or questioned children's awareness of and/or

engagement in racism were less likely to make parenting choices with an eye to their implications for children's understanding of race and racism.

What perhaps served as the lynchpin in these situations was whether or not adults genuinely believed and acted upon an awareness of children as active learners. Parents who believed that children can and do construct knowledge and meaning based on their experiences of the world, whether or not they receive direct instruction, were also the parents who believed that children can see and act upon racial differences. When children were acknowledged as fully capable human beings able to build their own interpretations and understandings of the world, parents were more likely to actively engage issues of race and racism in their parenting, wanting to play an active role in framing the process of learning in which their children were already engaged.

Adults' concepts of race, exposure, protection, and their knowledge of child development matter for the ways in which they parent young children around issues of race and racism. Anti-racist parenting appears more common in four contexts: 1) when racism is understood broadly, 2) when exposure is sought in conjunction with equality and benefits for all in society rather than advantages for individuals alone, 3) when protection from ignorance about the common ill of racism is desired for all people, and 4) when children are understood as racial beings who have a developing awareness of and engagement with race and racism and who actively study the world in which they live. Efforts to change dominant public knowledge, particularly among White people, in these four key areas could make a significant difference in the battle against racism and White supremacy.

Change would unlikely be immediate or complete, as it would be based upon an intentional and drastic ideological shift – a process requiring deep and deliberate attention focused on the dismantling of racist ideologies and the blatant and subtle ways they're rooted and manifested in White, middle-class lives. While change is likely to be slow, educating adults, particularly about the complexity of racism's nature and about child development as relates to race, might encourage well-intentioned White parents to examine their attitudes and actions more closely and seek to align their behaviors more strongly with the distaste for racism they espouse verbally.

The connection between the processes of parenting and the perpetuation or disruption of White supremacy makes parenting a critical link for anti-racist work.

Learning to rethink racism, exposure, and protection and spreading accurate information about child development and race has the potential to deconstruct the foundations upon which Discourses of White supremacy are grounded. As these bodies of knowledge become more historically informed and communally-oriented, parenting can increasingly become a site of resistance to White supremacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Culture is perpetuated and reproduced from one generation to the next through ongoing and bidirectional processes of socialization (Maccoby, 2007), including the individual and institutional reproduction of social inequalities. White people are embedded in a position of socially dominant racial privilege, and the process of parenting can reproduce in children our socially dominant status quo of racial inequality and White supremacy without the need for adults' conscious awareness or intentional recognition of doing so. As such, parenting is a primary site for the perpetuation of inequalities in society, including racism. But, parenting also has the potential to serve as a location of resistance and rebuilding – a position from which to contribute to the toppling of White supremacy and its destructive consequences. Thus, the study of parenting practices is vital for understanding current behaviors that both reproduce and resist racism.

One strength of this study is its conviction that the lived realities of individual lives reflect structural realities in society, and vice versa. While racism itself is an immense and culturally pervasive concept, White, middle-class parenting offers a concrete, bounded context in which to examine its manifestations and cultivate practical strategies of resistance. Discourses are the processes through which ideology is produced, reproduced, and maintained. Identifying and concretely addressing patterns of resistance to racist Discourses contributes to the dismantling and eradication of White supremacy. In this way, the work of this study provides both a window into the inescapabilty of racism in its day-to-day manifestations and offers hope that positive change is possible. Change is neither easy, nor without hardship, but models for changing our unjust racial realities are being built.

This work connects to past research, building on its foundations in understanding and supporting the positive racial socialization of young children and children's engagement in the world as racial beings. But it also contributes to the field – beginning the process of filling gaps in the literature concerning the parenting patterns of White, middle-class families around issues of race and racism and strategies for resisting White supremacy in the parenting of young children. In addition, this work lays the foundations for what research and study could be done in the future to further investigate the role of parenting in the perpetuation and/or disruption of White supremacy. Even in the study of White, middle-class parenting, the field would benefit from a deepening and broadening of the participant base. Engaging larger numbers of participants, parents of all gender

identities, and families in a range of geographic contexts (urban, suburban, and rural areas across the many geographic regions of the United States) would serve to further delineate parenting patterns that may be specific to urban, Midwestern mothers or to the larger, and extremely diverse, experiences of White, middle-class families. In addition, the field could benefit from engagement in longitudinal studies of White, middle-class parenting around issues of race and racism, particularly studies inclusive of both interview and observational data. While this study focused on only narrative data from adults, future work could expand to include observational data of everyday parenting to see the ways that race and racism are subtly or directly addressed in parenting with children at various ages and the messages being propagated. Observational and interview data could also be gathered through direct work with children to deepen understanding of their development and engagement of attitudes, beliefs, and actions related to race and racism. An added benefit of engaging in research over longer periods of time would be to document personal and societal change over time, offering clues to the process and challenges of resisting the racial status quo of White supremacy. The more that is understood about the parenting practices of socially dominant and privileged populations, the better positioned we are as a society to identify and enact parenting and socialization strategies aligned with an ideology of racial equality and justice.

White supremacy has a harmful impact on all people – Whites and people of color alike. The successful dismantling of racism would contribute to the righting of social, cultural, political, and economic injustices unfairly experienced by people of color in our world. There are many stages upon with the battle for racial justice can and should be waged. The parenting of young children is but one such site. White, middle-class parents have the power within their own everyday lives to make changes to their beliefs and actions that support a more racially just world. The fight for racial freedom must be a battle engaged on all fronts, including home soil. What White parents say and do has meaning for their children's developing understanding of race and shapes the roots of racial ideology, whether racist or libratory.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ORAL SCRIPT GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

Principal investigator: "Hello. My name is Kelly Baldwin and I'm a graduate student at DePaul University. As part of the work I am doing to complete my Masters thesis, I am looking for parents who are interested in talking with me about their experiences being a parent and also about their thoughts about parenting and race. Do you have a few minutes for me to tell you more about my work?"

Potential participant: "No, I do not have time to talk now."

Principal investigator: "Could I give you some information about my work and you could contact me at your convenience if you are interested in participating?

> ***Potential participant:*** "No."
>
> ***Principal investigator:*** "Okay. Thanks for your time. Have a good day."

> ***Potential participant:*** "Yes."
>
> ***Principal investigator:*** "Wonderful! Here is some information about my study [the "Recruitment Flyer"], and my contact information is at the bottom. Have a good day."

Potential participant: "Yes, I have a few minutes to talk now." OR "I read the flyer you gave me and I'm interested in learning more about participating in your study."

Principal investigator: "Great. Thanks for taking the time. Like I said, I'm looking for parents who are interested in talking with me about their experiences being a parent and also about their thoughts about parenting and race. Folks would be asked to participate in two conversations with me, each between ninety minutes and two hours in length and scheduled, ideally about one week apart, for days, times, and locations convenient to them and their schedule. In addition, parents would be asked to complete a one-page questionnaire, and after receiving the transcript of each conversation in which they had participated, they would be offered the opportunity – at their discretion – to revisit or clarify any ideas or themes within the transcripts, either during an already scheduled

conversation or during one scheduled for that purpose. Would you be interested in participating in the study?

> *Potential participant:* "No."
>
> *Principal investigator:* "Okay. Thanks for your time. Have a good day."

> *Potential participant:* "Maybe."
>
> *Principal investigator:* "Would you like more information, or do you have specific questions I could answer for you?"

> *Potential participant:* "Yes."
>
> *Principal investigator:* "Wonderful! Would now be a good time to schedule our first meeting?... Also, let me give you this form [the "Non-Exempt Studies with Adult Participants Consent to Participate in Research" form] which gives you more information about the research I'm doing, what you can expect, and your rights as someone agreeing to talk with me. My contact information is here [at the bottom of the page]; please call or email with any questions. When we meet for the first time, I'll keep a signed copy of this form and you'll keep a copy as well. May I have your phone number or email address in case I need to get in touch with you before we next meet?... Do you have any questions?... Thank you so much, and I'm looking forward to meeting with you soon!"

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FLYER

PARTICIPANTS WANTED
FOR A RESEARCH STUDY ON PARENTING & RACE

A currently underway research study is seeking parent volunteers who are willing to share their perspectives on parenting and their thoughts on issues of race and racism in the raising of young children.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE?
- Are you a mother?
- Is your oldest child between the ages of three and eight years old?
- Do you consider yourself white, middle-class, and heterosexual?
- Do you live in the city of Chicago?
- Do you, your child(ren), and your husband or partner live together in the same home?
- Would you be willing to have two one-on-one conversations about your parenting experiences and your thoughts on race?

If you answered YES to these questions, you would be a welcome participant in this research study.

WHAT WOULD BE EXPECTED?
You would be asked to meet with the researcher, Kelly Baldwin, for two one-on-one conversations to talk about your experiences as a parent. Each conversation would be ninety minutes to two hours in length and would be audio recorded. Conversations would be arranged for dates, times and locations convenient for you and your schedule. You would also be asked to complete a short questionnaire outlining basic demographic information concerning you and your family.

RISKS & BENEFITS:
Participating in this study is free of charge and does not involve any risks other than those encountered in daily life. You may not benefit personally from participating in this study, though the study may serve as an opportunity to reflect on your experiences and perspectives as a parent. In addition, you will receive print and/or digital transcripts of the conversations in which you participate for your own records.

INTERESTED?
If you would be interested in participating in this study or would like more information, please contact Kelly Baldwin by telephone at 617-851-6532 or by email at *kbaldwi3@mail.depaul.edu*.

Kelly is affiliated with DePaul University's Graduate School of Education. This research study was approved by the DePaul University IRB, protocol # KB010610EDU.

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM

FORM B FOR NON-EXEMPT STUDIES WITH ADULT PARTICIPANTS

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
"PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTING PRACTICES AND RACE"

What is the purpose of this research?
I am asking you to be in a research study because I am trying to learn more about white, middle-class parents' views on parenting and their thoughts on issues of race and racism in the raising of young children. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a Chicago parent dealing with the joys and challenges of raising young children and your oldest child is three years of age or older. This study is being conducted by Kelly Baldwin, a graduate student at DePaul University, in partial completion of her Masters degree requirements. This research is being supervised by her faculty advisor, Dr. Enora Brown.

How much time will this take?
This study will take between three and four hours of your time, divided between two meetings that will each be ninety minutes to two hours in length.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in two conversations talking about your experiences being a parent. The conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed for an accurate record of what was said. You will receive print and/or digital copies of these transcriptions and will be offered the opportunity to revisit or clarify any ideas or themes within them, either during an already scheduled conversation or during one scheduled at your discretion for that purpose. You will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire outlining basic demographic information concerning you and your family.

What are the risks involved in participating in this study?
Participating in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable answering certain questions but are welcome to decline to respond at any point. Every effort will be made to maintain and honor your confidentiality, but there is the remote possibility that others may connect you with the information you share.   There are no expectations for any severe, irreversible, psychological, physical, social, economic, or legal risks related to participation in this study.

What are the benefits of my participation in this study?
You may not personally benefit from participating in this study, though the study may serve as an opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences and perspectives as a

parent. However, I hope that what we learn will help other parents, educators, and researchers better understand parenting strategies and practices concerning the influence of race and racism on the processes of raising children.

Can I decide not to participate? If so, are there other options?
Yes, you can choose not to participate. Even if you agree to be in the study now, you can change your mind later and leave the study. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate or change your mind later.

How will the confidentiality of the research records be protected?
The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any report that might be published, pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity and information that could be used to identify you will not be included. Research records will be stored securely and only Kelly Baldwin will have access to the records that identify you by name. Some oversight groups, such as the DePaul University Institutional Review Board, may review records from your involvement in the study, but they are under obligation to maintain the confidentiality of your information. Audiotapes of your conversations will remain on file for one year beyond the conclusion of work related to the study, which helps support the integrity and validity of the work, though audiotapes and their transcriptions will remain secure and private at all times. When the audio tapes are no longer needed, they will be erased and physically destroyed before being placed in a dumpster for permanent disposal.

Whom can I contact for more information?
If you have questions about this study, please contact Kelly Baldwin at 617-851-6532 or by email at *kbaldwi3@mail.depaul.edu*. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Susan Loess-Perez, DePaul University's Director of Research Protections at 312-362-7593 or by email at *sloesspe@depaul.edu*.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have all my questions answered. (Check one:)

☐ I consent to be in this study.   ☐ I **DO NOT** consent to be in this study.

Signature:_____ Date: _____

Printed name: _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDES

CONVERSATION 1: Identity, Socialization, & Parenting Worldview

- Everyone has a story. Could you tell me a little about **your story as a parent**?

- In a span of five minutes or so, can you help me understand a little bit more about **your family** – who's in it, what's your context, what's important to you, how you spend your time and energy? How would you describe your family?

- Tell me about your **neighborhood**/where you live.

  o Who lives in your neighborhood?

  o What do you like about your neighborhood? What do wish were different? Why?

  o Did you choose to live there? Why?

So we've talked a little about you and your family. Let's talk a little bit about kids.

- How do you think children come to understand the world?

- Some researchers believe that parents are the most important socializing agent in children's lives. Other researchers see other factors – like schools and the media – as having more influence on how children come to understand the world. What do you think?

  [*Alternate question:* Do you think that your choices as a parent make a difference in who your child is and who she becomes? What role does your parenting play in who your child will grow to be and the values she holds?]

- What do you think your child learns from you?

- What does "being a **successful parent**" mean to you?

  o What does successful parenting look like in a concrete, day-to-day way? How do you recognize it?

  o When thinking about your own efforts to be a successful parent, what are your parenting priorities? Are those things consciously on your mind as you parent, or not really? What do you say and what do you do to help achieve your parenting goals?

- Thinking back on your own childhood, are there things that you think your family did well in raising you that influence your parenting with your child(ren)? Are there things you try to do differently? Why?

- What are your greatest **barriers or obstacles** in parenting?
    - How do you address those challenges/obstacles?

- Are there resources or supports that help you deal with the challenges of parenting? If so, what or who? How do you seek out or maintain those supports?

- What **traits or qualities** do you hope your child grows to possess?

  [*Alternate question:* What **hopes or dreams** do you have for your child?]
    - How or why did you come to value those characteristics?
    - Does the importance you place on these beliefs impact your parenting – what you say, what you do, the decisions you make? How?
    - What is your role in helping your child(ren) develop these traits? (Do you play a role?) What do you *say* or what do you *do* to encourage these traits in your child(ren)?
    - When thinking about your hopes for your child(ren), how or when do you evaluate your progress or measure your success?

- Do you think your child can grow to be anyone or anything she wants to be? Do you anticipate any limitations to the possibilities of her life?
    - Do you think all children have the same chances to be successful in the world? Why?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDES (continued)

CONVERSATION 2: Race & Parenting

My research has to do with thinking about race and parenting, so most of my questions today have to do with thinking about those things. I thought we'd start by thinking about "race" and what that word means, so that as we continue talking we can be on the same page.

- What does **race** mean to you?

- Does race matter? How? Why?

  o Do you think race matters to other people? How do you know?

- Broadly speaking, what does it mean to be White?

- Does being White have an impact on your life? On your parenting? How? Why? [*Alternate question:* What does being White (having a White identity) mean for you personally?]

  o Is this aspect of your identity important or unimportant to you? Why?

  o How do you feel about your racial identity?

- Some people think that being White carries a lot of benefits in our society, while others think that being White is a disadvantage. What do you think? Why? Examples?

- What do your parents believe about race? How do you know?

  o Are there ways that they have conveyed those ideas to you – in words, deeds, both, neither? Examples?

- What, if any, messages did your family give you about your own racial identity as you were growing up?

- Do you agree or disagree with your parents' views on race? If you disagree, how did you develop your own ideas or how have your ideas changed over time?

- What do your close friends believe about race? How do you know? Do their beliefs match your own? Or do they differ? How do you feel about that? Why?

- Some researchers think that children as young as two recognize racial differences and participate in the world using those understandings. Others believe that children don't

understand race until much later – in late elementary school or early middle school. What do you think? How did you come to think that way?

- Do you think that your child(ren) understands racial differences? What do you think she understands or thinks? How do you know? Could you give an example?

- What do you want your child(ren) to understand about race? How will she learn those things?

- Do you play a role in her understanding of race?
    - What do you *say* to your child about race or what do you say that could impact your child(ren)'s understanding of race?
    - What do you *do* that could impact your child(ren)'s understanding of race?

- Is your child exposed to much racial diversity? Do you want her to be? Why? For what purpose?

- Lots of times when we talk about race, we also talk about racism. What does **racism** mean to you?

- Some people say that having elected Barack Obama president marks the end of racism in the United States; that we are a post-race nation. Others believe that racism is still alive and well in the United States. What do you think?
    - Do you think it would have been possible for a Black man to be elected president when you were a child? What, if anything, has changed?
[*Alternate, or additional, question:* Do you talk to your children about race-related events – current or in history? How? For what purpose? (ex. – immigration marches/union protests, civil rights, Obama, Sotomayor, Gates, MLK, Parks, etc.)]
- Does racism (still) exist? How do you know?

- Where do you think **race relations** in the United States stand today?
    - Have they changed since you were a child?

- Do you have any thoughts or hopes about the future of race relations in the United States?

- Do any of these things affect the ways you think about parenting your own child(ren) or the actions that you take as a parent?

- What, if anything, do you want your child(ren) to know about race, racism, and/or race relations? Why?
    - o Some parents think those lessons should be taught directly, while others think that they should be learned through the course of life. What do you think? (If they should be taught directly, by whom, how, and when?)
- Some parents think that talking with children about the differences between people is really important. And other parents think that talking about differences doesn't matter or can cause problems that weren't there before. What do you think?

- Do your beliefs about race, racism, and race relations influence the ways you parent? How? Examples?
- Do you think there is value or importance in people talking about race? Why or why not?

Additional questions, if they seem relevant or important:

- Have you ever experienced prejudice or discrimination? How did you deal with it? Does your experience impact the ways you parent or how you'd like your child(ren) to function in the world?
- Throughout your life, have most of your friends and other folks close to you been White? [If it's helpful, pause to mentally or verbally list the five people closest to you.] If so, why do you think this is the case? If not, what do you think led you to cross racial/ethnic lines in creating those relationships? Has the racial makeup of your circle of close friends remained the same over time or changed? How? Why?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDES (continued)

CONVERSATION 3: Race & Parenting revisited

Researcher's note: *This conversation guide was used only with Terra as a follow up to the previous two conversations. As a result, some questions are the same as those covered in Conversation #2 and some were specific to Terra and her stories of race and parenting.*

- Since the last time we met, was there anything you thought more about or thought about in a different way that you wanted to talk about today?

- What does **race** mean to you?

- Does race matter? How? (Why?)

- You've commented before that your life experiences may have given you a unique perspective on race and racism. Can you talk about that? How has your background shaped your views on race?

- How did **being White** have an impact on **your experiences** as a child? A young person? An adult? Can you explain or give some examples?
    o How were those experiences difficult for you? How were they fulfilling for you?
    o As an adult, what do you wish that your childhood self would have known that might have made your experiences easier or less confusing?

- (How) have your ideas or beliefs about race changed over time? Why?

- How did you learn about race and/or racism?

- When you were a child, did your parents ever talk to you about race or racism? What did they say or do?

- If you had had conversations about race or racism as a child, how would that have changed your experiences or your understanding of your experiences?

- Some people think that being White carries a lot of benefits in our society, while others think that being White is a disadvantage. What do you think? Why? Examples?

- Some researchers think that young children see racial differences and treat others differently based on them. Others believe that children don't understand race until much later. What do you think? Do children understand race? Racism? When? How did you come to think that way?

- What you think your child thinks or understands about racial differences? How do you think she sees race being acted out? How do you know? Could you give an example?

- What do you want your child to understand about race? How will she learn those things?

- How does race have an impact on your language or actions as a parent? Do you think it should?

- When we talked before, you told me that you do not talk about race or racism with your daughter. Can you tell me how you came to that decision?

- Have you ever talked with your daughter about your experiences with race as a child (and/or as an adult)? [Do you think you would ever share your experiences with her?] How might talking about race help her? How might it not help her?

- When we talked before, you talked about some very specific conversations you've had with your daughter about issues that other parents might find challenging or controversial. You've talked openly with her about disability, homelessness, gender equality, and classmates with gay parents or family members. Some people think of race and racism as similarly challenging or controversial topics. How is race different from these other topics that you intentionally talk with your daughter about?

- When thinking about race and racism, do you think change is possible? Can people or societies change? [Why can't people change? Exceptions?] How? What role do you or I play in that change? What role do you want your child to play?

- As a biology teacher, how does biology shape your views on race and racism? Do you think that biology has anything to teach us about race or racism?

APPENDIX E: "PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTING PRACTICES AND RACE" STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

"PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTING AND RACE" STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for participating in this pilot study exploring the parenting goals and practices of parents with young children. Information disclosed on this form will be kept strictly confidential and will be used to help the researcher organize the information you have shared with her. If you have any questions or concerns in relation to this questionnaire or the research study, please contact Kelly Baldwin at *kbaldwi3@mail.depaul.edu* or 617-851-6532.

Please be aware that categorical options listed below addressing race/ethnicity, household income, and educational attainment are categories set forth by the U.S. Census Bureau and do not necessarily reflect categorical divisions endorsed by the researcher.

Name:
Address:

Telephone:
Email:

How many children do you have?
What are their names and ages?

Who lives in your household? Please list all persons, their ages, and their relation to you.
ex. – Elsa, 47, sister

What do you consider your race/ethnicity?
_____ White
_____ Black/African American
_____ Hispanic/Latino
_____ Asian
_____ Pacific Islander
_____ American Indian/ Alaska Native
_____ other:

What do you consider your family's social class?*
_____ lower class
_____ working class
_____ lower-middle class
_____ upper-middle class
_____ upper class
_____ other:

* Listed class distinctions are from the model in: Thompson, W. & Hickey, J. (2005). *Society in Focus.* Boston, MA: Pearson, Allyn & Bacon.

What was your total household income in 2009?*
_____ less than $10,000
_____ $10,000 – $14,999
_____ $15,000 – $24,999
_____ $25,000 – $34,999
_____ $35,000 – $49,999
_____ $50,000 – $74,999
_____ $75,000 – $99,999
_____ $100,000 – $149,999
_____ $150,000 – $199,999
_____ $200,000 and over

* Household income is the combined total of all income received through earnings, unemployment compensation, workers' compensation, social security, supplemental security income, public assistance, veterans' payments, survivor benefits, disability benefits, pension or retirement income, interest, dividends, rents, royalties, estates and trusts, educational assistance, alimony, child support, financial assistance from outside of the household, and other income.

What do you consider your sexual orientation?

What is your highest level of educational attainment?
_____ less than 9th grade
_____ 9th to 12th grade, no diploma
_____ High school diploma (or equivalency)
_____ some college, no degree
_____ Associate's degree
_____ Bachelor's degree
_____ Graduate or professional degree

If you participate in paid employment, what kind of work do you do and/or what is your job title?

Please briefly list or describe hopes or goals you have in the parenting of your child(ren).

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APPENDIX F: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

All interviews took place between February and August 2010. The names of participants and their family members are pseudonyms, and in order to preserve participant confidentiality, some personal details have been omitted or modified to maintain meaning or importance while preventing identification. In addition to background information, the contexts under which I met each woman are noted, as well as information I knew about her before participating in our scheduled interviews.

The women who participated in the study were not selected at random, but rather with the intentional purpose of seeking a range of experiences and ideas related to parenting and race. While all of the women share a set of common characteristics (see the section "Participant Selection" within the chapter titled "Research Design and Methodology"), requesting their participation in the interviews was based in part on an intention to represent a range of perspectives in regards to issues of race and racism as they relate to White identity and parenting.

Corinne (*kə-RIN*)

Corinne (40 years old) grew up in western North Carolina in a poor, predominantly White community. She described her childhood family – consisting of her mother, father, younger sister, and self – primarily in cultural terms (rather than racial terms), marking specifically the Highland Scots, Southern, and Mountain aspects of their identity. Much of her extended family was from the South and she described them as extremely conservative and blatantly racist.

After graduating high school, Corinne attended Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut for two years. While there her understanding of identity – both generally and personally – expanded in several ways. She described the development of new understandings of social class and socio-economic status. Coming from her southern Appalachian Mountains upbringing, she had understood herself to be economically privileged, marked for example by the material realities of living in a house rather than a trailer home like many of her peers. Her experiences at Yale extended her understanding of socio-economic diversity (as well as geographic, racial, and religious differences, among others). In addition, Corinne began to recognize the ways that she was marked as a "diversity enhancement" by the University because of her geographic upbringing in the Appalachian Mountains.

Corinne completed her undergraduate work at the University of North Carolina, where she engaged in documentary studies and worked as an ethnographer talking with local Head Start children about issues of family, race, and violence. Corinne also holds an MFA in filmmaking from Florida State University, where she taught courses in screenwriting and documentary production.

Corinne moved to Chicago in the mid-2000s, where she is now mother to two sons – five-year-old Garrett and three-year-old Joshua – with her partner and husband Robert (37 years old). Both pregnancies were unplanned and unexpected, but both Corinne and Robert welcomed the news. She said, "We both just got very excited and happy about it very quickly. And almost immediately I started doing things differently from my mother!" Rather than trusting her parental instincts, Corinne placed value and power in having access to research-based information and being able to make informed parenting choices based on that knowledge. As a parent-to-be and later as a mother, research was a key support in her parenting process and choices. She spent considerable time and effort critically learning about, working through, and reflecting upon parenting, both in general and in her own parenting journey.

Corinne, Robert, Garrett, and Joshua lived in a largely residential neighborhood in northwest Chicago. Corinne said that if she had had the knowledge of Chicago neighborhoods she does now she would have tried to buy a home in a more racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood, as their current neighborhood is very White. Corinne's and Robert's upbringings in more rural areas of the South contributed to their desire to buy a home with outdoor yard space, leading them to their current house and neighborhood.

At the time of the interviews, Corinne and Robert's household income was between $50,000 and $75,000 a year. Robert worked in Chicago's comedy improv world for nearly a decade and is now an electrician working for the city. And while Corinne spent much of her time at home with the boys, she also worked (some paid labor and some unpaid) as an instructor of classes in cloth diapering and babywearing, as the development director of a Chicago-based film company, and as a board member for a local Fair Trade organization.

When asked to select her social class from a pre-established list (which included labels such a working class, lower- and upper-middle class, and upper class), Corinne selected "Other" and wrote in "educated class." In the interviews she described the

complexity with which she now understands social class as including a deep combination of financial wealth, education, history, and access to resources. While she supported a paradigm shift in the categorization of people by social class, she also understood that in conventional terms she is middle-class. She said, "Robert and I were just talking, and we were kind of laughing about the fact that economically we're lower middle-class. Like, economically, if you just go based on how much money we make and the fact that he's in a working class job.... But we don't feel lower middle class.... We're both like, 'Wow. Lower middle class. That's weird.' Because of how you think about yourself… and because of our level of education, we're probably, I would say, upper-middle class."

Similarly, when asked her sexual orientation, Corinne rejected society's dominant idea of a sexual binary (heterosexual and homosexual as the only options) and described sexuality as a continuum. She described herself as "heterosexual (mostly)," openly challenging and seeking to complicate conventionally-defined identity categories.

When asked to briefly list or describe her hopes or goals in the parenting of her children, she wrote:

1. love learning/curiosity
2. empathy/respect for others
3. belief that failure is not an end, but a learning experience
4. sense of gratitude
5. that the boys feel totally accepted by me
6. that they accept themselves
7. respect for the environment
8. that they can access creativity
9. that they can access spirituality

I approached Corinne about participation in the interview process because we attended the same church. As Corinne was an active voice in the faith community, I knew the general context of her immediate family, as well as her active involvement in fair trade and social justice issues and efforts. I had also heard her speak openly about her challenges in parenting and the intentionality with which she approached the task, including her continuing journey to raise racially aware and accepting children capable of engaging in rich relationships in a racially diverse world. Prior to the interviews, however, we had never engaged in more than passing greetings. Both of our interviews took place in private rooms at the church on quiet weekday afternoons.

Katie

Katie (43 years old) grew up in a small town in western Connecticut. She was the youngest of four children with three older brothers, her youngest sibling eleven years her senior. She came from a two parent home where her mother was a stay-at-home mom and her father worked only a few miles down the road. She described the small New England town of her upbringing as a colonial little place with only one stoplight and two-acre zoning that meant you couldn't see the house nearest to your own. She said it was a homogenous and safe community with an almost entirely White population. Katie's parents and much of her extended family still lived in New England — primarily in Connecticut and Maine — and she visited them several times a year, staying for up to three weeks at a time when possible.

After graduating high school, Katie attended Denison University, a private liberal arts college in Granville, Ohio. Her studies focused on the liberal arts, education, and Spanish, and after graduating she spent the next few years living and working in various locations across the United States. She said, "As soon as I graduated from college in Ohio, I went to L.A. for two years; I went to Boston for two years; I went to D.C.; New York; Newport, Rhode Island; back here [to Chicago]. I had to go out in the world and figure it out…. I mean I just felt like 'I need to see the world.' Like, enough with this small little world…. I thought I might go back there [to Connecticut], but I still needed to go explore the world and figure it out." While in Boston, Katie attended graduate school at Wheelock College and earned a Master's degree in Education.

At the time of the interviews, Katie had been married to her husband Markus (39 years old) for eight years and they had two children — six-year-old son Ian and four-year-old daughter Nella. Markus' parents emigrated from Latvia, a nation in the Baltic region of Northern Europe, to Chicago when he was a child, and their Latvian ancestry and heritage played an important role in the lives of Katie and Markus' children. Katie's family lineage had history in the United States from the time of the Mayflower and that history was also an important part of the children's ancestral heritage.

For the past 20 years Katie's professional career had been in the field of market research, and at the time of our interviews she had very recently left the director's position of the Chicago-branch of a nation-wide market research company with which she had been employed for thirteen years. She described her current self as a stay-at-home mom, a role to which she was still adjusting. She said, "I almost feel like I'm *just* starting out. I

mean, I guess I thought I was a mom before, but *now* I'm like, 'Okay, I'm going to focus.' And I have *so* many things [I want to accomplish as a mother]." Markus was the founder, president, and CEO of an alternative investment advisory firm based in downtown-Chicago, where he put in long hours and intense dedication to help ensure the company's continued success. As her role in family life was changing, Katie described her experience and the challenges of adjusting, saying, "I just stopped working [and]... I'm just kind of still putting the family together. Um, as a mom, as a stay-at-home mom.... That's a really big shift.... I think [Markus] really, really needed me to stay home to really put the pieces together truly. And I'm feeling it so heavily already. Just how much it was needed. I can't even believe it. So I'm already spreading myself too thin and I'm not even working anymore!"

At the time of the interviews, Katie and Markus' yearly household income was over $200,000, and Katie considered their family to be upper-middle class. The family lived together in a four-story townhouse in a gated community on Chicago's Near North Side and their children attended a private school on Chicago's north side. The family also had a house in Michigan that they liked to visit for long weekends or short breaks away from the city.

When asked to briefly list or describe her hopes or goals in the parenting of her children, Katie wrote:

- To feel secure in their environment; feel safe.
- I hope they feel free to express themselves.
- nurture them
- provide them with any tool necessary to learn in their environment

I approached Katie for participation in the research study because her children attended a school with which I had an affiliation. I had observed both of her children in the school-context and interacted with her and her husband only in the context of the school. I inquired about her interest in the study because of my perception that she would classify herself as middle-class, while, I assumed, living a very upper-middle or upper class lifestyle. Prior to the interviews I knew very little about her personal life or her ideas about parenting and nothing related to her beliefs about issues of race and racism. Per Katie's request, our interview conversations took place at Katie's home while the children were with their nanny.

Terra

Terra (38 years old) grew up on the Southside of Chicago. Her parents divorced when she was young, and she was raised as an only child in a single-parent home led by her mother. Classifying her childhood family as working poor, she lived in a predominantly Black community and attended the local public school. When asked about her mother's role in deciding to live in their Southside community, Terra explained that the choice, in part, had to do with childcare support Terra's grandmother could provide. She said:

> "My grandma [had] lived there [in that Southside community] for a long time and the neighborhood kind of, like, shifted. And old people don't like to move, so she stayed. And when my parents got divorced, my grandma had to watch me, so my mom would drive me into that neighborhood so my grandma could watch me, and so I went to school with all those kids."

She remembered as a young person always being surrounded by people of color, almost all of whom were Black. This was her norm and she felt very comfortable with it. Her friends were Black, and early-on she thought little of being part of a racial minority, though she remembered a very specific experience in 7th grade when her racial identity was pointed out and it was expressed that she was not welcome. At that point she began to question whether she belonged in the community with which she most closely identified, and if not, what was the "right" place for her. She attended Chicago Public Schools through eighth grade, but then made a switch. In describing her high school experiences, she said:

> "When I graduated from eighth grade... I was really into school. I really wanted to go to a good school and the public school wasn't touted as the best school, so I went to a private, all girls, Catholic school – which was a complete 180 from what I was dealing with [in my public, co-ed, city school], and when I went there I felt really out of place. Which is very strange because everybody was [White]; [there were] four Black girls in the whole school and I knew all of them. And then there was me. And then everybody else was White. And everyone grew up in that neighborhood.... So I never fit into that school. It never – I mean, I loved the academics of it, but I never really quite – It was a struggle for my mom to send me there. So after my sophomore year, I decided to leave because it just wasn't – It was too much money. My mom was struggling. And I wasn't fitting in; I didn't

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really enjoy it. I mean, I enjoyed the academic part of it – but then, it just kinda like, 'This sucks.' You know? So then I went to the public school."

Her final two years of high school in the Chicago Public Schools system put her back in a more racially diverse environment where she felt more comfortable socially. She described her young self as very self-motivated academically, though she had little support in this undertaking. She said:

"I grew up, you know, no money. A single parent – single mom. No father. I didn't really have anyone in terms of education, like no one said, 'Oh, you gotta do well in school.' I was kinda just driven in my own right.... It's not like my mom was a bad parent. She definitely just didn't have the money or the education or the support to do much with me other than get by day-to-day because she was exhausted. You know, since she'd be working and then she'd come home and that was that. You know, she would be exhausted."

Even so, Terra's academic drive led her to attend college at the University of Chicago where she graduated with a degree in microbiology and a minor in chemistry. In college, Terra's experiences of diversity continued to expand, particularly as she became more aware of broad class and religious differences, and she became increasingly comfortable and successful in predominantly White contexts, while not disconnecting from the foundations of her upbringing. Terra went on to earn a Master's degree in education from DePaul University, a private Catholic university in Chicago, and had been a high school biology teacher for thirteen years at the time of the interviews. While attending graduate school, Terra taught at a high school in one of Chicago's northern suburbs, where she had pursued a position because of the focus on academics and the racially and economically diverse student body (with a student population of over 50% students of color and over 40% low-income enrollment). She wrote her Master's thesis about beliefs students in the school held surrounding issues of race and racism, commenting on her own observations of racism in the school environment (especially in tracking practices and parent expectations).

At the time of the interviews Terra taught at a different high school in a different Chicago suburb. The school is one of the nation's top performing public schools and has an almost entirely White, affluent and/or economically privileged population. While she expressed feeling less culturally comfortable in this space, she also verbalized a personal

recognition that her life experiences play a valuable role in the ways she understands her role as a teacher with these students.

Terra and her husband Cory (40 years old) had one child, five-year-old Aralyn, who was – and will be – their only child. Terra described Aralyn as their "miracle baby" because she was born after over five years of challenges conceiving that included infertility treatments, doctors in three states, and other complications. The family, along with Terra's 68-year-old mother, lived in a two-flat building in one of Chicago's Northside neighborhoods. Terra moved to the neighborhood over 17 years earlier because of its proximity to her favorite sports team, and never left – transitioning from being single to being married to having a child, all in the same neighborhood.

After Aralyn was first born, Terra took two years off from teaching to be a stay-at-home mom, and when she returned to teaching, she employed a nanny for one year. After that, Terra's mother was living with the family and provided childcare support for the hours Aralyn wasn't in preschool and before Terra got home from work. Terra said, "We've kind of taken [my mother] in, so [Aralyn] has that extended family relationship which I think is really cool.... I kinda grew up like that with my grandma too, and so [Aralyn]'s gettin' that experience, so she's got a lot of love."

At the time of the interviews Terra and Cory's household income was between $150,000 and $200,000 a year, and she considered the family upper-middle class. Cory held a senior position at a large telecommunications company in Chicago, and Terra continued to work full time as a teacher.

When asked to briefly list or describe her hopes or goals in her parenting of Aralyn, she wrote:

- respectful to others and self
- responsibility
- accountability
- grateful
- works hard and tries her best
- self-aware

I approached Terra about participating in the research study because a friend who knew about my work had been the family's nanny. I knew almost nothing about Terra before we met – only the general context of their family composition and her occupation.

I also knew that she had described herself as having more liberal views on most social issues than her husband and many of their friends, whom she saw as more conservative. But I had never met Terra until we were introduced, so had never observed her or her family in the limited ways I had observed the other two families of this study before approaching them. Terra and I met three separate times over the course of several months at a coffee shop near her house. We conversed in areas where there were few, if any, other people, and where we had few distractions or interruptions.

Locating ourselves

In the process of interviewing participants for any given research study, investigators abide by a predetermined set of requirements to identify the desired perspectives and stories they seek. Such specificity might (inaccurately) lead to assumptions that participants with so many shared traits will also share a common set of lived experiences. While this sometimes holds true, more often what is found is a brilliantly rich and nuanced diversity of individual stories and experiences.

This research study sought women who embodied a very specific set of social criteria, and yet, because we as humans are compilations of a hugely complex array of social markers and experiences, the women's ways of understanding and living in the world were widely diverse, even as, on paper, they might seem "the same." The women who shared their stories in this work show that degree of diversity of experiences and beliefs clearly and unapologetically, despite the lengthy list of commonalities they share.

As discussed in greater detail earlier (in the chapter titled "Research Design and Methodology"), participants selected for involvement in this study were sought based on their embodiment of a specific set of social criteria. Participants needed to self-identify as White, middle-class, heterosexual, urban-dwelling women living in the city of Chicago who resided with their partner and children (in a two-parent home) where their oldest child (if they had more than one) was between the ages of three- and eight years old. In addition, the children were expected to be similarly situated as White, middle-class persons. The intention was to gather narratives from mothers in a very specific social location and to question how their thoughts on issues of parenting and race might contribute to a greater pool of thinking about ways to resist racism and White supremacy through parenting practices.

In addition to the list of required similarities, an additional set of commonalities emerged from the participants' self-identifications. All of the women were legally married to their partners, and all of their children were their biological children. All of the women were United States born, American citizens for whom English was their native language. In addition, all three identified as Christian, though associating themselves with different denominations (Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian). All of the women were also well-educated, each holding a Master's degree in their respective fields. And they were all able-bodied women within a five-year age range of one another in their late thirties and early forties.

The importance of noting these commonalities is valuable for situating the similarities between the women's self-identifications, but also in highlighting the amalgamation of socially dominant and privileged identity markers that they embody. As White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied Christians who are U.S. born, English-speaking, and highly educated, these women are socially located in a complexly privileged social space. In addition, as examples of the traditionally defined nuclear family headed by two married, heterosexual parents living together with their biological children, these women held an additional set of social privileges because of their current familial constellations. As such, the women's stories and perspectives came from a very specific social location and must be understood from that place.

Even so, these women were in no way three voices telling one shared story. While elements of their stories highlight what may be common beliefs or actions among woman socially situated as they are, each mother shared ideas, experiences, and a history that were distinctly her own and that had a unique impact on her personal understanding of the world and her role in it. As sociologist Charles Gallagher (2000) wrote, "Apart from benefits that accrue to whites because of their skin color no single metanarrative of whiteness exists" (p. 80).

Perhaps the most marked difference between the women was their geographic and economic histories, as well as the constellation of their families of origin. Corinne grew up working class in the Appalachian south in a nuclear family – mother, father, and two children (both daughters) close in age – with two working parents. Katie grew up in New England as part of an upper-middle class family consisting of a mother, father, and four children. Katie was the youngest and her three brothers were substantially older than she, so in some ways she described her experiences as similar to those of an only child.

Her mother was a stay-at-home mom and her father worked to support the family financially. Terra grew up poor on the Southside of Chicago as an only child in a single-parent home led by her mother. Terra spent a substantial amount of time with her maternal grandmother, who provided childcare while Terra's mother worked full-time. These aspects of the women's personal histories gave each a distinctly different vantage from which to begin experiencing and understanding the world, and the impact of their unique experiences became evident in the ideologies they held about parenting and racism.

Even as parenting adults, there were still significant differences between the women geographically and economically. While they all resided within the city limits of Chicago and described themselves as middle-class, their lived realities of these labels were distinctly different. Each family was a homeowner (rather than a renter), but the neighborhoods in which they lived varied. While they all resided on the north side of the city within a four-and-a-half-mile radius of one another, their neighborhoods varied by population density, racial demographics (though all three neighborhoods were between roughly 70 and 80% White), and median income. In addition, the three families' household incomes varied from between $50,000 and $75,000 a year to over $200,000 a year. In all of the households, the men worked full-time, but the women's paid labor varied. One of the mothers worked full-time, one worked an irregularly scheduled part-time job, and one was a full-time stay-at-home mother, though all had held full-time paid employment in the past.

In addition, the individual families' compositions varied. Corinne had two boys, ages three and five. Katie had two children, a four-year-old daughter and a six-year-old son. And Terra had one, five-year-old daughter. In addition, parenting duties and philosophies varied from family to family and sometimes within the family. Corinne described the intentional effort she and her husband put into sharing parental responsibilities equally and in seeking to employ the same parenting strategies both philosophically and practically. On the other hand, Katie spoke of divergences, and conflicts, between the parenting philosophies and practices she sought to employ and those of her husband. And Terra fell somewhere in between, seeing herself as the establisher of parental goals and practices and her husband as a follower in the execution of those goals.