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White Racial Socialization: Progressive Fathers on Raising "Antiracist" Children

For the past 30 years, the definition of racial socialization has referred to how parents prepare children of color to flourish within a society structured by white supremacy. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with eight white affluent fathers, this study explores fathers' participation in white racial socialization processes. The article focuses on fathers who identify as "progressive" and examines the relationship between fathers' understandings of what it means to raise an "antiracist" child, the explicit and implicit lessons of racial socialization that follow from these understandings, and hegemonic whiteness. Findings illustrate how these fathers understand their role as a white father, how their attempts to raise antiracist children both challenge and reinforce hegemonic whiteness, and what role race and class privilege play in this process.

Racial socialization is typically defined as "the mechanisms through which parents transmit information, values, and perspectives about … race to their children" (Hughes et al., 2006). For the past 30 years, this definition has referred to how parents prepare children of color to flourish within a society structured by white supremacy (Hughes et al., 2006; Winkler, 2012). Largely, research has focused on how parents prepare black children for potential experiences of prejudice and discrimination (Bowman & Howard, 1985; Hughes, 2003; Peters, 2002) or physical racial violence (Thomas & Blackmon, 2015); how "child, parent, and situational correlates" predict socialization practices (Brown, Tanner-Smith, Lesane-Brown, & Ezell, 2007, p. 15); and the impact these parenting strategies have on youth outcomes with respect to identity, self-esteem, coping strategies, academics, and so forth (see Hughes et al., 2006).

Scholarship on racial socialization has expanded dramatically in more recent years, incorporating research with Latino, Japanese American, and multiracial families (see, e.g., Brega & Coleman, 1999; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Rollins & Hunter, 2013). However, few studies have theorized or empirically investigated the processes of racial socialization in white families who benefit from structural racial privilege (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman, 2010). Burton et al. (2010) found that recent studies of racial socialization "assumed that people of color will encounter racism but did not fully examine the socialization processes among whites that lead them to discriminate" (p. 453). Given this, little is known about how the newest generation of young whites learns about race from their white families.

Although this article certainly extends existing academic scholarship, my research emerges in a moment of heightened public discourse surrounding race in America. Discussions about how to talk to children about race can be found throughout popular media: parenting blogs,

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op-eds, newspaper columns, and more debate the "best" way to talk about race with children in the aftermath of racist hate crimes or in the context of an increased focus on the long-standing racialized relationship between youth of color and the police. Urgent questions are being asked about how parents should discuss these topics with their children, including how to approach these topics with white children. But there is limited empirical social science evidence to draw on to help inform these discussions about white racial socialization. How do white children learn about race in the context of the white family? What role do parents play in shaping their children's racial views? And how do white parents—even those with the best, most racially progressive intentions of raising "antiracist" kids—sometimes still unintentionally reproduce the very structures they seek to challenge? Through identifying the ways in which these dynamics unfold, this article provides evidence that helps inform these urgent and important questions. Although this article focuses on only one small component of this complex process of children's racial learning in white families, the work is situated within a larger project that explores more broadly how ideologies that uphold white supremacy are shared, reproduced, challenged, and/or reworked by white children and their parents (Hagerman, 2016).

In the pages to come, I examine fathers' participation in white racial socialization processes. Although many studies of racial socialization focus on mothers, and research shows that many white adults adhere to color-blind racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), this article focuses on white fathers who identify as politically "progressive." These fathers also claim a specific "antiracist" position. I examine the relationship between fathers' understandings of what it means to raise an "antiracist" child, the explicit and implicit lessons of racial socialization that follow from those understandings, and hegemonic whiteness. In addition, I explore how these white dads understand what they consider their unique role as a father to be in shaping their children's views as well as how social class matters in this process. The findings are groundbreaking in that they illustrate the ways these privileged fathers' conscious attempts to raise antiracist white children both challenge and reinforce hegemonic whiteness as well as how a family's class status shapes the process of white racial socialization. As a whole, this research seeks to further our collective understandings of how white progressive parenting practices shape the ways white children from such households make sense of race in America—practices that both challenge and reproduce white supremacy in America.

Background

White Racial Socialization

In some ways, white racial socialization is theoretically different from racial socialization as it relates to children of color, for how children learn to navigate structural disadvantage is often different from how children learn to navigate structural advantage. For example, although many studies of racial socialization in families of color or multiracial families have focused on measuring and assessing parents' explicit statements to children about topics such as racial pride or navigating prejudice (Brown et al., 2007; Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes et al., 2006; Rollins & Hunter, 2013), existing sociological research has illustrated that many white adults do not talk openly or explicitly about race (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Lewis, 2004) or even recognize that they "have" race (Burton et al., 2010; Lewis, 2004). The few studies conducted with white families on this topic have demonstrated that some white parents are indifferent to racial socialization (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Hamm, 2001). Subsequently, because of this focus on only explicit mechanisms of racial socialization—as in much of the past scholarship with children of color (for important exceptions, see Brega & Coleman, 1999; Winkler, 2010)—racial socialization processes within families with racial privilege remain elusive. This is especially important to consider given the pervasive nature of color-blind ideology in racially stratified America. This "color-blindness" refers to "commonsense" understandings of race relations—which ultimately serve to justify existing racial inequality—in which people believe that race no longer matters in contemporary American society, that racism no longer exists in the United States, and that any existing patterned inequality is due to individual failures and therefore does not require institutional-level responses (Forman & Lewis, 2006).

Understanding the implicit and subtle ways that parents shape white children's perspectives on race is key to extending theories of racial

socialization. Some of these implicit aspects of socialization include the decisions white parents make about how to set up their child's life. Through their decisions about schools, neighborhoods, peer groups, travel, media consumption, and so forth, parents construct a particular "racial context of childhood" (Hagerman, 2014, p. 2600). Children's interactions in this context shape the racial common sense they then produce. Unlike past theories of socialization that make empirically unsupported assumptions about children simply mimicking the ideas of their parents, this theory of socialization takes seriously the role that children's agency plays in these processes and how children actively participate in their own production of ideas. Implicit aspects of racial socialization, however, are not solely tied to the big decisions parents make about designing the context of childhood. So, too, the small, everyday choices that white parents make shape how their children produce ideas about race, such as when to lock car doors, which friendships to encourage or discourage, whether and how to respond to questions posed by children, and so on. Hagerman (2014) showed that in families with parents who actively constructed "color-blind contexts" for their children—meaning that parents avoided discussions about race and believed their children did not notice race—subtle modeling behaviors, whether intentional or not, still sent powerful racial messages to white children.

And yet it is far too simplistic to assume that all white families avoid explicit forms of racial socialization or do not speak explicitly about race. How does white racial socialization work in families where white parents do talk openly about race? What do progressive white fathers think it means to raise an "antiracist" white child? And how are white fathers approaching this parenting goal?

Additionally, with few exceptions (see Coles & Green, 2009; McAdoo, 1988), the scholarly literature on familial racial socialization generally does not examine how or why fathers specifically participate in racial socialization processes. In fact, the larger sociological study of families in America has historically excluded the perspectives and observations of fathers as they go about their everyday lives (Lareau, 2000). As Lareau (2000) stated, "Researchers need to focus more on what fathers actually do in family life" (p. 407). The small but important body of psychological research that explores fathers' participation in shaping how white children make sense of race is framed as research on the parental influence on children's formation of white racial attitudes rather than on ideological positions (Aboud & Doyle, 1996; Castelli, Carraro, Tomelleri, & Amari, 2007; O'Bryan, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2004). Overall, these studies are limited, particularly in that they focus on fathers who are not engaged in the daily lives of their children. Further, these studies generally approach the topic from a psychological perspective rather than a sociological one, leading us to know little about how, why, and to which ends fathers participate in racial socialization processes—especially those fathers in white families who identify as "progressive" and are the recipients of multiple forms of structural privilege, which, unlike white affluent mothers, includes male privilege. Feagin and O'Brien (2003) wrote in their account of elite, progressive white men's perspectives on race in America that "most have substantial power to reshape the practices, laws, and institutions of this society in the direction of a more egalitarian democracy" (p. 29). I argue here that white men also participate in shaping the newest generation of affluent whites' perspectives on race as fathers. Further, I show that these fathers view themselves as having a unique role to play as a father in teaching their children about race, and they harness their privileges to ensure that their children have the experiences they, as fathers, understand to be ideal for promoting antiracism.

Much like current scholarship on parenting decisions surrounding children's consumption patterns (Pugh, 2009), overall approaches to child rearing (Lareau, 2011), parents' relationships with youth sports (Messner, 2009), and issues of school choice (e.g., Johnson, 2015; Lacy, 2007; Posey-Maddox, 2014), social class likely plays an important role in shaping white racial socialization. For instance, affluent parents can often move fluidly between one decision to another, changing schools or neighborhoods or child-care providers or sports teams, and at a moment's notice, if deemed necessary. Because they have real options when it comes to the decisions they make, examining the dynamics of affluent families offers a unique opportunity to tease out the complexities of how and why these parents make the decisions they do as well as about what they say about race and class privilege and the possibilities of challenging hegemonic whiteness.

Hegemonic Whiteness

As Burton et al. (2010) argued, "Focusing only on minority racial socialization perpetuates the fallacy that only non-Whites 'have' race" (p. 453). Although some whites may not understand themselves as "having" race or understand that "'normal' everyday modes of operation and interaction" are often rooted in "White interests" (p. 634), "whites are, in fact, a group or social collective" and are "racial actors" in a racial structure (Lewis, 2004, p. 624). Whites share with one another a "similar location" within that structure, but how they embody their whiteness varies (Lewis, 2004, p. 634). To make sense of "the long-term staying power of white privilege and the multifarious manifestations of the experience of whiteness" (McDermott & Samson, 2005), and to understand how white hegemony functions, Lewis (2004), drawing from Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity, articulated a theory of white hegemony as "that 'configuration of [racial] practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of [white supremacy]' and that secures the dominant position of whites" (Lewis, 2004, p. 634, brackets in original). This "shifting configuration of practices and meanings that occupy the dominant position in a particular racial formation and that successfully manage to occupy the empty space of 'normality' in our culture" is at the core of hegemonic whiteness (Lewis, 2004, p. 634). Hegemonic whiteness, thus, is not "a quality inherent to individual whites but is a collective social force that shapes their lives just as it shapes the lives of racial minorities … and carries material rewards" (Lewis, 2004, p. 634). Outlining a "conceptual framework" of hegemonic whiteness, Hughey (2010, 2012) theorized its specific dimensions as they emerged from his ethnographic research, including, among other things, "claiming 'color capital' through interracial friendships," "embracing an 'embattled victim status,' and "framing oneself as a kind of messianic 'white savior' to people of color" (p. 187). This hegemonic status emerges as the "ideal" that other forms of whiteness are measured against, and this ideal, or what is understood as "normal," serves to reproduce white supremacy.

Despite the power and pervasiveness of hegemony, however, "the reality of any hegemony … is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant elements in the society" (Williams, 1977, p. 113). For all of its power, then, white hegemony is by definition always incomplete, and although it is always in the process of extending itself, it is also always open to challenges from counterhegemonic forms of whiteness, even if those challenges are small or inconsistent. This understanding of white hegemony allows us to recognize both its dominance and the possibility of counterhegemonic, white antiracist praxis (Perry & Shotwell, 2009). Here, I explain how at different moments and in different ways these fathers represent both a challenge to and a reinforcement of hegemonic whiteness.

Method

Data presented in this article come from in-depth, ethnographic interviews conducted with eight fathers of children between 10 and 13 years of age who identified as white and either "progressive" or at the "left" of the political spectrum. All names of people and places have been changed. This data set is part of a larger two-year ethnographic study conducted between 2011 and 2013 with 30 affluent white families residing in a medium-sized metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States that I refer to as "Petersfield"; *affluent* was defined as families who owned a home and in which at least one parent had a professional-managerial career and held a graduate or professional degree. My positionality as a white woman shaped what I learned and likely how my participants interacted with me (Gallagher, 2008). This race-of-interviewer effect was likely quite strong throughout data collection, although it provided me access to viewpoints that would likely not be available to me were I a person of color. Further research on this topic ought to consider manipulating race and gender of interviewer to gain insight into the ways that perhaps my own standpoint shaped the data as well as my interpretations of it.

Through multiple nodes of structured snowball sampling, families were recruited to participate in this study. Building relationships was key to the recruitment process and for the viability of this study altogether, and I spent 3 months incorporating myself into the community. Some of my attempts to recruit families were unsuccessful, particularly in the beginning of the data collection period, when

my connections to the community were weaker. Potential participants learned about my research agenda via an e-mail recruitment script. They were told that the study was concerned with how children learn about inequality and how parents shape those understandings. Any barriers the participants had at the start of the data collection process appeared to drop away quickly as rapport was established. Evidence for this can be found in the participants' overall willingness to share opinions, even when they indicated that they knew their opinions were unpopular. Moments did emerge when participants expressed concerns about their parenting decisions being judged negatively, which was a constant negotiation for them. I managed this tension by asking follow-up questions, providing them with the opportunity to explain their decisions more fully, and demonstrating my interest in how they make sense of the topics discussed for purposes of research alone. Some of the specific ways I accessed these families and built trust included strategically placing myself in the community. I moved to this community for this research, immersing myself in the day-to-day experiences of Petersfield residents. As such, I used my "outsider" status to my advantage: Many parents were enthusiastic about telling me "how it is" in this community. I also used my "insider" status—at the time, I was a graduate student in my 20s at a university many of the parents thought of favorably—to build rapport. A major limitation of how I set up my study is that parents and children were aware of my research agenda. Given how sensitive the topic of race is for many white people, perhaps not providing families with this information would have yielded different results. My experience with conducting research with children and navigating the institutional review board, however, leads me to question the feasibility of this option.

Because this is one part of a larger ethnographic study involving children and parents, it should be noted that in seven of the eight interviews with fathers, both parents were interviewed, but in one family, the father was the only parent interviewed. In three of these seven cases, the parents were interviewed together. Although the three dyadic interviews did present richer or more precise data than the five individual interviews, particularly when the parents would add to each other's statements, remind each other of something forgotten or left out, or even argue about the details of a story being told, these formal interviews were part of a broader study that included more opportunities to discuss these topics than the time allotted to the formal interview. As such, rather than yielding different results altogether, the dyadic interviews added to the richness of the ethnographic data and offered further insights into how white parents made sense of their role in raising white children.

I used MAXQDA to code my data in multiple ways. First, I coded the data according to "categories that make sense in terms of … relevant interests, commitments, literatures, and/or perspectives," otherwise known as "initial coding" or "open" coding (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006, p. 201; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Then, I recoded the data, drawing on qualitative grounded theory coding as described by Charmaz (1995): "Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain the data" (p. 341). Here, the objective was to develop theoretical categories from the data based on what participants told me and what I observed about how they constructed ideas about race, racism, inequality, privilege, and so forth, in order to generate theory about racial socialization processes (Emerson, 2001). By coding the same text in different ways, I was able to see patterns and themes in my data and engage in the analytical work of grounded theory research. I coded my data while still collecting data, a technique that allowed me to conduct an inductive analysis of the data and to develop further questions to ask participants or next directions for my ethnographic data collection based on emerging themes found through coding. The units I studied ranged from cultural practices to encounters to roles to social to groups, as described by Lofland et al. (2001), but the combinations of these units and the contradictions I observed between what people articulated to me and their everyday behavior were most important. Overall, the strength of this study is the richness of my qualitative data, and drawing on this qualitative methodological approach to both data collection and data analysis leads to the generation of theory pertaining to white racial socialization.

Findings

Here I describe three related themes that emerged from interviews with fathers and draw out examples of how these fathers both

challenged and reproduced hegemonic whiteness as well as how they perceived their role as a dad to be especially influential in their children's lives. Further, I explore how race and class privilege operate with respect to these themes.

Interracial Friendships

Tom Lacey was a social scientist. Janet McMillan was an independent environmental consultant. Both Tom and Janet held Ph.D.s. They had been married for 15 years and had one daughter, Charlotte, who was in seventh grade. Charlotte was a social, energetic child who got along well with her parents and had what seemed to be a close, open, and friendly relationship with both of them. In addition to interviewing Tom in his office, I also spent time with the family in their home, interviewing Janet and Charlotte there. Janet and Tom had mutually agreed-on goals for what they wanted their daughter to experience. For instance, Tom told me that the reason they chose the neighborhood and school that they did was because they wanted their daughter to be in an environment that cultivated an awareness and appreciation of human difference and provided Charlotte with the opportunity for interracial contact:

> We liked that Charlotte would go to a school that wouldn't be a bunch of rich white kids.… I don't know that I want her to have that super white-bread, sit around with a bunch of, you know, over-achieving, you know, wealthy white Americans, having them as her entire base of everyone she knows. That made us nervous.… Coming to a school that had more racial and economic mixes was appealing.

Tom and Janet agreed that they wanted their daughter to grow up in a diverse environment. This is true for many of the parents in this study. However, unlike some families in the larger study that talked about diversity as a goal but then employed strategies of avoidance that resulted in their children not living quite the multicultural life parents purported to want, Tom and Janet were committed to sending their child to the most diverse public school in the city in terms of race and class, and they purposefully chose to live in a neighborhood with some degree of race and class diversity. This meant that in addition to the affluent white families who owned large single-family homes in this neighborhood, there were also large houses that had been divided into apartments and were rented out to students and families who could not afford or did not wish to purchase a home. Some black and Latino families lived in this neighborhood, though the neighborhood comprised primarily white families. This particular neighborhood was within relatively close proximity of an impoverished and primarily black neighborhood, which meant that the public schools children in the neighborhood attended were diverse both along race and class lines. In general, Tom and Janet sought to, as they put it, "integrate" diversity into Charlotte's life though appreciating that structural inequality persists and will not disappear by simply celebrating diversity or engaging in what is referred to as "diversity discourse" or "happy talk" in which the term *diversity* is a euphemism for race and allows whites to talk comfortably about race without talking about oppression (Anderson, 1999). Yet these parents also provided their daughter with several experiences and opportunities outside of school, such as private music lessons and tutoring. This is evidence of how even when attempting to challenge educational inequity by sending their child to the school other affluent parents dismiss as inferior, they also intentionally provided their child with educational privileges, unintentionally reproducing the very educational inequality they claim to reject.

When I asked Tom specifically why he thought living and going to school in racially mixed spaces was "more appealing," he drew on his own lived experience, telling me story after story about his time spent working in a civil rights organization after college surrounded by people of color with whom he developed close friendships that continue to this day. According to Tom, being in racially diverse spaces as a young person allowed him to realize his own flaws as a white man operating with a particular white lens and exposed him to the suffering of people he cared about as he witnessed firsthand acts of discrimination. "It's hard for me to think about race and not think about how lucky I was to have that experience with that group of friends who let me join them," he told me. "Which they didn't have to [do]," he added. Tom then reflected on his own experience as the only white man in a group of black and Latino friends to inform his parenting approach:

> As her father … what are the good seeds in Charlotte that I'm trying to water? … If Charlotte is never mingling with people with other opinions … or perspectives, … there is a lot lost there. There is a lot of deepening of your human understanding of other people that gets—you miss it.… It makes you … be more thoughtful … and I don't know how that can't make you a better person. It should help you be a kinder human being.

Tom believed that intergroup contact was essential to developing compassion and kindness and to being a "better" person, and—given the context of his comments within the larger interview—a better *white* person. One could interpret his comments here as color-blind—when referring to who Charlotte mingles with, rather than saying "black people," he substituted the deracialized language of "people with other opinions." Even with this interpretation, though, the larger point Tom appeared to be making was much different from an overall color-blind approach or an approach to parenting in which having a token black friend in the life of one's child is the primary goal, or in which race is not discussed or acknowledged whatsoever. Rather, he believed that without meaningful relationships with people of color, for instance, Charlotte would think that her own ideas about race were correct instead of learning about the lived experiences and vantage points of people of color. Tom wants Charlotte to listen to those around her; to "be on the fringes" of many different social groups at school, as when he was growing up; and to form ideas about race and inequality that are rooted in a respect for the experiences and perspectives of people of color. He attributed these goals to the fact that as a white affluent man, he had come to recognize his own multiple forms of privilege through meaningful conversations and friendships with those who are different from him.

Unlike Tom's wife, who focused on educating Charlotte about race through the use of multicultural history books, documentaries, and museum visits, Tom placed tremendous value on meaningful social interactions with people of color, actively putting himself in spaces where he or Charlotte were the only white people present and listening to the perspectives of people of color. Tom explained to me that in the local community, and especially in interracial spaces, he had witnessed white people take on leadership positions and "marginalize the perspectives" of people of color. Interestingly, he did not report actively encouraging Charlotte to join a social action group of any kind, although my later follow-up interviews with Charlotte four years later—outside the scope of this article—revealed that she did participate in such groups and informal activities such as local youth protests against racialized police brutality.

Tom also told me that he purposefully and carefully observed Charlotte as she interacted with others at school events, monitoring the extent to which she had meaningful friendships across racial lines:

> I'm sitting at … a big school family-fun night, which is a way of torturing parents.… They are running around and I see her being friendly with [black peers], or at her … chorus performances, just last time she was standing next to an African American girl and the two of them were giggling, laughing, having a grand old time the whole time[,] so I certainly wasn't seeing that separation there.… I'm watching in those sort of natural settings, I'm seeing her having friends that are black.

These everyday choices about what to pay attention to at school, what kinds of friendships to encourage, reflected white racial socialization in action and Tom's role in the process. Tom fretted about Charlotte's friendship groups—he told me how Charlotte had more black friends in elementary school and that as she got older, he worried about the ways peer groups at the school seemed to be "separating" along racial lines. He talked to Charlotte about this and encouraged her to spend time with some of the black girls she used to hang out with more regularly. Overall, Tom's position was that Charlotte needed to learn how to listen and appreciate the perspectives of people of color. Not only did he explicitly state that this skill would make Charlotte a "better person" but, given the larger context of the conversation, he implied that this is how Charlotte could be a better white person. In addition, Tom articulated to me that he has a different relationship with Charlotte from that her mother has with her. For instance, he explained how he is often a go-between when his daughter and her mother argue with one another. When Janet wanted to go on a different vacation from Tom and Charlotte, Tom said he "went in and made the pitch [to Charlotte] and [afterward] Janet was like, 'wow that was a lot better than I thought!' I nailed that one, absolutely!" he added with a laugh. In this sense, Tom viewed his role as Charlotte's father as uniquely influential—he

described himself as more "introspective" than Janet and suggested that Charlotte is perhaps more like him than her mother, which inspired him to give Charlotte the same opportunities for interracial friendship formation that he had earlier in life.

Tom was not the only father who understood his own racial progressiveness as emerging from the formation of interracial friendships, nor the only father who was actively involved in attempts to cultivate a racially diverse context of childhood for his children for reasons beyond the color capital attached to "Look, I have a black friend." In addition to interacting with their children on an everyday basis, fielding their questions about race, helping them navigate the world through talking about race, and paying attention to whom they talk to at school events or on social media, these fathers were also heavily involved in enrichment programs and athletics, spaces where many children interacted with one another. Seth Kerner, for instance, who worked in public policy, coached his daughter's science and technology team. In particular, he told me how important it is that the team be a racially diverse group of girls: "How racially diverse is this? It's not. And that's something that a few of us are spending some of our time working on," he tells me. He went on to describe how he has determinedly paired his team up with a local Boys & Girls Club and facilitated a relationship between the two organizations. He told me that he believed children learn a great deal outside of school, and, as a parent, it was his responsibility to help create spaces where his child could do what she loves and to bring in other kids who might otherwise be left out of that space. He describes a paradox in his part of the city: "We have an integrated school but we choose to be on soccer teams that are all white." Seth spent a lot of time and energy thinking about and working toward changing the demographics of his daughter's life outside of school because, like Tom, he believed foremost that interracial friendship formation is the best way for young white children to see the world differently. Like Tom, this perspective was also a result of his own positive intergroup friendships in childhood and adulthood that he believes have helped him become not only a better white father but also a better affluent father:

> The opportunities that I had to be in an integrated environment in high school were as much about the economic integration as it was about the racial integration.… [M]y perspective is that most parents [want] a broad range of exposure for their kids.… [W]e want to make sure we are not living in a pocket community where they will only see people of the same stratification that we are—economic, racially, developmentally, et cetera.

Seth believed that both race and class shape one's life chances, and he actively worked, through his volunteer work with the science and technology team, for example, to create as many racially and economically diverse spaces as he could for his two children—as well as to bring this enrichment to students who are typically left out of these contexts, specifically black students or impoverished students. He told me that this has been a long-standing goal from when his children were very young—he described the preschool his children attended, which was designed to bring together children with a range of physical and mental abilities. "Their perspective on what is a 'special need,' what is a 'disability,' has really been informed by those early experiences," he tells me, reflecting on the choice to send the children to this particular private preschool. Seth's remarks resonate with findings from other studies that illustrate how white parents tend to passively hope for interracial "exposure" through institutions, whereas black parents tend to actively encourage individual interracial contact outside of places like school (Hamm, 2001).

And yet even as Tom encouraged his daughter to have multiracial friendship groups and even as Seth seemed to truly value playing a leadership role in cultivating multiracial science club activities, an undertone of white privilege is still at play. The fact that these fathers believe that they can create the contexts they want, the fact that they know that they have some say over the racial composition of their children's lives, and the fact that they can and do orchestrate all these dynamics for their children spoke to the privileged status of these men. Parents of children of color might also want their children to have a multiracial friendship group or to diversify the science club, but they do not always have the option of inserting their children into predominantly white spaces or social groups. These fathers harnessed race and class privilege to construct the context they desired for their children—even if what they desired was to diversify the science club—in part because they believed all children should have

access and that they have the power to change that, but also for the sake of their own childrens' experiences of diversity. Both reasons illuminate the presence of race and class privilege.

Raymond Green has two sons, both of whom were very interested in sports. He, too, was interested in creating a diverse environment for his children. Raymond was heavily involved in the everyday lives of his children at home and on the soccer field. Research on fathers' involvement in youth sports is growing, with findings demonstrating the prevalence of fathers in leadership positions in youth sporting contexts (Gottzén & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012; Messner, 2009). Yet little of this research focuses on father's involvement in racial socialization processes in youth sports. Environments like the soccer field are important places where, in some communities, interracial friendships have the potential to form—and they are contexts in children's lives where fathers rather than mothers are often in leadership roles. Sure enough, the Petersfield soccer field was were where many racial politics played out, according to Raymond, as well as many other parents with whom I spoke: "We had the most racially diverse soccer team.… It was actually a very good, positive racially mixed experience.… [E]veryone had a great time.… We had two or three Hispanic kids, we had five or six black kids." Raymond discussed how unusual this is in Petersfield, a segregated community with a very vibrant youth soccer scene. He was actively committed to creating opportunities for his sons to form interracial friendships in the same way as Tom and Seth, and he viewed youth soccer as a powerful space to do that work. As when Tom was watching Charlotte at the concert with her black friends, Raymond was proud of the fact that his team, unlike many of the other teams in the community, embraced diversity.

Yet despite Raymond's dedication to coaching a diverse team, he still made comments about the lack of black fathers at the games or practices, drawing on stereotypes about absent black fathers who "don't care about their kids." So too does he express surprise at the fact that the experience overall went so well given how racially diverse the team was, suggesting that he did not think this would be the case initially. And so, although in some ways these progressive white fathers challenged hegemonic whiteness, their challenges were inconsistent. And at times, the same fathers reproduced the very ideas they say they sought to challenge, as when Raymond reproduced exactly what he said he sought to challenge through coaching. I found that these fathers pushed back against hegemonic whiteness, challenging it in particular ways and at particular moments while also reinforcing hegemonic whiteness in other ways and at other moments.

Social psychological literature suggests that a particular set of conditions must be in place for cross-racial contact to result in positive outcomes with respect to white racial attitudes (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Sociologists also refer to this as affective knowledge and have examined empirically the role empathy and cross-racial contact play in white antiracist transformation (Feagin, 2000; Perry & Shotwell, 1999). Unlike the participants in Hughey's (2012) study who viewed interracial contact as a form of capital, appropriating material or symbolic aspects of black culture or who use stories about "my black friend" as a form of establishing legitimacy in conversations about race or to inject culture into a "cultureless" white identity, the fathers in this study appeared to want to help their children have genuine opportunities for equal-status contact, with the goal of raising children who had tools to think critically about race. Data illustrated that the fathers' active approaches to facilitating intergroup contact for their children appeared to be an attempt to counter hegemonic whiteness. The fathers wanted their children to have meaningful interactions with people of color so that they would grow to genuinely care about and challenge the inequality that structures their lives—inequality that might go unnoticed and unchallenged by them, if not for knowledge gained through interracial friendships. Certainly, there were moments when parents engaged in "color capital" pursuits, but, generally, the fathers in this study were very critical of white peers who did so. For instance, according to the interpretations of a handful of parents in the larger study, some parents in the community posted photographs of their children playing with black children on social media sites to "prove" how progressive they were, concerning themselves more with their performance of progressive whiteness than with launching real challenges to white supremacy.

Further, I found that these fathers viewed themselves as having special connections to their children's lives that the children's mothers did not share—either through serving as coaches or

leaders in extracurricular activities or through developing bonds between child and father. As such, these fathers understood their own role in their child's life—and their role in shaping how their children made sense of race—as unique and distinct from that of their child's mother.

Using Strangers to Teach Privilege

Using strangers to teach privilege is related to encouraging multiracial friendships, but it is also substantively distinct. The fathers in this study articulated their shared beliefs that exposing their children to strangers was a powerful way to teach their kids about privilege. Fathers participated in this form of racial socialization by traveling internationally to learn to see one's own various forms of privilege through exposure to strangers from across the globe, through volunteering at a soup kitchen with one's child to remind the child of how lucky he or she is that there is enough food to eat at home, by watching documentaries about growing up poor to appreciate one's family wealth, by driving through impoverished neighborhoods as a way to compare one's own life to that of others, and so on. The fathers in this study also articulated their shared beliefs that travel was an important part of racial socialization. Travel, according to them, offered their children the chance to recognize their unearned privileges through exposure to strangers, and often, it appears, nonconsenting strangers, from across the globe. These activities involved strangers rather than friends, or even potential friends, and they often brought together race and class privilege, particularly in the local context of Petersfield, where the average median income for white families is nearly twice that of the average median income for black families. These activities reinforced existing racial power dynamics at the local and even international levels. Specifically, the equal-status conditions that must be in place according to Allport (1954) for positive outcomes of intergroup contact structurally cannot exist in the instances described given the nature of these interactions.

Because of the class status of the families in this study, many of the fathers told me about the trips or "service opportunities" they had arranged that would teach their children about their privileges growing up in Petersfield. Fathers told me about their older children who studied abroad in high school, or about their business trips to Asia or South America that turned into extended holidays for the family, or their volunteer trips to Africa or Central America. Thus, these travel choices, alongside local choices about exposure to strangers, were made deliberately. For example, Tom explained why he believed travel is so important:

> Charlotte has a knack [for] keeping an eye out for people and tak[ing] care of them.… [S]he sees that people's lives are harder than hers, and of course we've traveled and seen that, and I remember, its like that light goes on in her head and [she's] like, Wait a minute! These … babies, these children we are seeing in this tiny little village in this country, they are poor because they plopped out of a mother right here. If they had plopped out of my mother back in Petersfield, they'd be thinking about that trip to Paris they want to take someday.

Although Tom described a moment in his daughter's life when she recognized her own privilege, he did not actively discuss how he talked to Charlotte about what she was seeing. Tom indicated that he was glad to know that his daughter cares about other people, but from his telling of the story, he did not then talk critically with Charlotte about the power relations or possible objectification implicit in this interaction.

Similarly, Greg Norton-Smith, a lawyer and civil rights advocate, explained to me his take on exposing his two children to diversity in a global sense:

> The most important thing that I hope my kids grow up with is what their place in the world is and what other people's place in the world is, and you know, how connected we are to all those other people, and that you can't really be content until other people have the same opportunities you have and you gotta … be somebody in that space.… And that would be great if they found their way in life to make sure that everybody got the same sort of opportunities [that they have].

Although talking in more abstract terms here, Greg's point was similar to Tom's—cultivating an awareness of privilege in one's own child may lead them to work for equality in their future lives. Yet again, the inconsistency lies in that exposure to "other people" also reflects power dynamics in which the bodies of the marginalized are sites for the privileged to learn something about themselves.

Although these fathers rejected color-blind ideology, believed that racism is structural, and took on alternative racial ideological positions,

at times they seemed to unintentionally reproduce the very constraints and power dynamics they seek to displace for their children. Although the intentions behind these forms of exposure were not intentionally malicious, there are elements of objectification and power at play. To what extent is this aspect of racial socialization lacking the consent of the "strangers" who these parents may or may not be objectifying to teach their affluent white child how lucky she or he is? This can really be seen in the context of exposing children to impoverished people of color, objectifying individuals so that children of privilege can appreciate their position in the world. In contrast, Winkler (2010) finds that black mothers also use travel as a way to expose their children to people of different races but to different ends and in less patronizing ways given differences in power hierarchies.

In other words, sometimes these fathers seemed to want their children to embody the aspect of hegemonic whiteness described by Hughey (2012) as "framing oneself as a kind of messianic 'white savior' to people of color" (p. 187) through mission trips or volunteering at soup kitchens. However, at other times, variations on this theme were observed. Specifically, the emerging ideal of affluent whiteness embodied here included framing oneself as possessing an acute awareness of privilege, derived primarily through exposure to the suffering of "others." This concept relates to the notion of privilege checking, in which people in positions of structural privilege participate in an exercise of first recognizing their own privilege and then calling other privileged people out for not doing so. While on the one hand this may seem innocuous and perhaps even a productive way to challenge structural privilege, on the other hand, this behavior has the potential to establish a hierarchy among the privileged (aware versus nonaware) or a sort of competition of who is "the best" white person in the room, and as McWhorter (2015) asks, "Why, and for whose benefit?" In this sense, privilege checking becomes more about a performance of racial progressiveness and whites' feelings that distracts from the action necessary to actually challenge larger structural forces that allow privilege to exist in the first place. Thus, although I argue that aspects of this emerging ideal whiteness are diverged from hegemonic whiteness as previously described, rather than being counterhegemonic, in this case, white dominance is rearticulated in a slightly new way, the goal of exposure not being collective antiracist action, but self-interest and emotional growth for oneself, or in the case of this research, for one's white child.

Standing Up to Racism

A third theme in how these fathers thought about and made sense of the goals of their everyday, explicit participation in white racial socialization was that they wanted their children to stand up to racism, even if this meant they would be "victimized" as a result of doing so. This pattern paradoxically embodies both the "embattled victim status" that Hughey (2012) discussed as one dimension of hegemonic whiteness at the same time that it exemplifies the power of hegemonic whiteness—that when whites deviate from the dominant form of ideal whiteness and express an alternative of emergent ideal form of whiteness, there are marginalizing consequences. The fathers shared brief examples with me. In both of the cases presented here, the men used a language of violence to describe what they wanted to do to the particular white adult in question. First, Raymond told me how disgusted he and his child were after witnessing the behavior of an exclusively white soccer team from a nearby suburb:

> There were players on the team that wouldn't shake hands with [our black and Latino players]. *And* the coaches didn't do anything about it. If I were the coach, they all would have been *done*.… [T]he coach should have been strung up basically [laughing].

Raymond explained how both he and all the boys on the team were disgusted by this behavior and that he talked to the players about the incident and tried to help the children make sense of what had happened. Raymond, the coach of one of the most racially diverse soccer teams in the area, explained how he felt insulted by the white coaches on the opposing team for their behavior. Ironically, his use of the phrase "strung up" echoes the language of racial violence in the form of lynching.

Second, Seth shared an example of his daughter being victimized by what he calls a "racist school environment" that failed to serve the needs of the students of color and that had teachers who mistreated students of color on a regular basis:

> There were two kids in particular who, you know, you just cried to see. African American little boys who just had nothing.… [One morning they were] standing there shivering with barely anything on their feet on one of the coldest, snowiest days and they were arriving late .... The teacher was like, "Why are you late?" And [one child] said, "Can we go get free breakfast now?" And she was like, "No! You're late! You missed it. Why are you so late anyway?" He's like, "The bus never came." So these two boys with barely anything on their feet were just asking for a free breakfast because they had walked a mile and a half … to be at school and the teacher was not being helpful and supportive and I wanted to throttle her right then.

Seth went on to tell me how the school acquired a new teacher who worked really well with these two students and they were moved to her classroom. The teacher, along with parents like Seth, wrote letters to the central office asking that the changes not occur, though Seth's letter is focused on his own daughter's proximity to the matter:

> Lindsay's sense of justice and what is right and wrong, that was just a sucker punch to her.… [S]he was coming home with these stories, every night until she was in tears and so depressed that she couldn't take it anymore. And so that is why we had to move schools. So we moved away from an integrated public school into a small, private, progressive school because of racism.

This example illustrates both the "embattled victim status," or the ways whites perceive they are stigmatized by their white racial identity even if that identity is "antiracist," and why a class analysis is required when theorizing about white racial socialization (Hughey, 2012). The simple fact that the parents in this study could remove their children from a school environment and select an alternative private school in the middle of the school year demonstrated how affluence provided them with the ability to move fluidly back and forth between facing racial conflict and escaping it when it worked or did not work for them. When their attempts at raising antiracist white children became too difficult, or when they felt their child was at risk or had been victimized in an attempt to resist racism, they had the option to withdraw—and did—from the scenario entirely. This decision, in and of itself, also sent powerful contradictory messages to Lindsay—messages both about standing up to and retreating from racism.

Overall, based on the interviews with these progressive white dads, raising what they believe to be the ideal white child primarily included fostering interracial relationships, teaching privilege through exposure to strangers, and standing up to racism by supporting a white child even if she or he was victimized in the process. Although I have not described all the fathers interviewed in detail, given space constraints, it should be noted that they all shared with me similar stories, and the same themes emerged in their parenting practices.

Discussion

This article has presented themes related to how a group of progressive, affluent white fathers make sense of what it means to raise an antiracist white child, how these understandings connect to the everyday implicit and explicit decisions parents make that shape the socialization process, and how these attempts at raising antiracist white children connect to hegemonic whiteness. The study found that these white progressive fathers participated in this process of racial socialization and had specific ideas about the best way to do so. They drew on these ideas when making parenting decisions, which served to both challenge and reinforce hegemonic whiteness. This study also showed how these fathers view themselves as serving as a unique pathway to action in shaping how their children make sense of race: Whether because of their role as soccer coach or leader of the science club, their more good-natured relationship with their children in comparison to that of the child's mother, or their own willingness to use their own privilege as white affluent men to stand up to authority, these fathers understood themselves as playing an important and distinct role in teaching their white children lessons about race.

According to these fathers, racially socializing white children to be antiracist is more about creating opportunities for intergroup contact and less about interrogating structural privilege or talking to their children about being white. This can be seen through the ways these fathers encouraged cross-racial friendships, valued racially diverse classrooms and extracurricular activities, and embraced particular kinds of volunteer and travel experiences. These fathers believed that through these experiences, their children would learn about the struggles of others, which would implicitly help their children

appreciate their own unearned privileges. In this sense, these fathers understood white racial socialization to be first and foremost about learning about how others are marginalized. These fathers did not spend a lot of time discussing with me how they helped their children understand their own whiteness or structural advantages, and they focused instead on the positive lessons their children could learn about human difference through intergroup contact.

Overall, unlike white parents in previous research who adhere to a color-blind ideology, these fathers embraced an alternative ideology, which shaped how they fathered. I found that although these fathers at times unintentionally continued to draw upon the dominant framework or "system of meaning" (Hughey, 2012, p. 203) of hegemonic whiteness, they paradoxically also engaged in counterhegemonic ideals of whiteness—ideals that moved beyond performances of being the best white person in the room and toward raising children with tools to work to dismantle white supremacy, tools that come from more than just a "color-blind" tool kit. I argue that these challenges, even if they are inconsistent and imperfect, cannot be condensed into a monolithic understanding of how whites understand race or of how white racial socialization unfolds. White hegemony is never "total or exclusive," and as Williams (1977) theorized, like any hegemony, it "must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and opposition which question or threaten its dominance" (Williams, 1977, p. 113). Through recognizing that "the hegemonic has to be seen as more than the simple transmission of an (unchanging) dominance," we theoretically allow for the possibility of counterhegemonic white antiracist praxis to emerge (Williams, 1977, p. 113).

Given the important ways in which race and class privileges are at play, theoretical understandings of the process of white racial socialization ought to be intersectional and include an analysis that addresses not only the structural privileges of whiteness but also class privileges. The fathers in this study drew heavily on their access to wealth when making the very decisions that shaped the racial context in which their children grew and developed—a major component of white racial socialization. Further, this study shows that these fathers drew on their wealth when things did not go their way or when they decided to back out of a situation they deemed "too racist" for their child. This is especially apparent in situations in which their children witnessed explicit forms of racism. When these fathers insulated their white children from these moments, they reinforced the very privilege they sought to undermine. Their own race and class privilege allowed them to enable their child to avoid the painful realities of white hegemony as experienced by people of color and to embrace interracial interactions when desired.

In conclusion, the fathers discussed here—white affluent men—wanted to raise white children who would stand up to racism; would challenge color-blind ways of thinking; and would be compassionate, empathetic individuals who would hear the perspectives of people of color and incorporate those perspectives into their own understanding of how American society operates and their own actions against racism. These fathers understood that they played a special role in helping their children reach these goals—admirable goals to have in a racialized society like that of the United States and, from the larger study and existing scholarship on whites, certainly less common goals. Yet what this research demonstrates, in part, is that "white racial dominance is reproduced [even] under the best of intentions and political motives" (Hughey, 2012, p. 193). Even as these fathers, at times, succeeded in challenging hegemonic whiteness through their approach to white racial socialization, they also, at times, paradoxically reproduced the very social hierarchies they wanted to dismantle for their children. This finding alone is especially relevant to ongoing discussions of racial inequality, racial violence, racial justice in America, and the role that white progressives should play in taking action to resist and challenge white supremacy. Further, findings from this research also illuminate the problematic ways in which some progressive whites fail to recognize how their own actions and thoughts reflect an unintentional continued commitment to hegemonic whiteness and a subtle reinvestment in the racial status quo.

Future research ought to consider how white fathers who adhere to color-blind ideology or, in contrast, possess overtly racist ideological positions participate in familial white racial socialization, the impact these approaches to racial socialization have on children's real understandings about race, and how this process unfolds in families in which white parents hold different views on race from each other. In addition,

the literature on racial socialization could benefit from more qualitative research like that of Winkler (2012), who has observed and analyzed the dynamics of implicit forms of racial socialization across all families. Most important, future work on this topic should remain committed to furthering the understanding of how race and racism, race and class inequality, and structural privilege and disadvantage shape the lived experiences of children and families in America.

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