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Schools are a central fixture in many American children’s’ lives. From middle childhood to adolescence, the influence of parents and other caretakers decreases as they interact more with peers, teachers, and other adults in their communities (Aldana & Byrd 2015; Bradshaw 2014). **Consequently, schools facilitate children' formations of core identities and beliefs.** Historically, analysts have explored these developments with Black students' educational experiences such as their academic placement, relationships with teachers, and discipline, and their influence on their identities, racial attitudes, educational performance, and life outcomes (Bañales et. al 2020; Francis & Darity 2021; Pena-Shaff et. al 2019; Brown 2007; Hughes 2009). Other studies extend these issues to Latino, Asian American, and multi-racial individuals (see, e.g., Brega & Coleman, 1999; Phinney & Chavira, 1995; Stone 2017). However, white American students remain largely absent from these inquiries due to the seemingly invisible and white-centering logic of colorblind ideology, which posits that race does not matter, all people are equal, and that racism is a relic of the past (Bonilla-Silva 2018). Because of their dominant position in the United States' contemporary racial order, colorblindness serves an **ego-protective function** for white individuals. It allows white people to enjoy the material advantages and "psychological wages" of whiteness while minimizing the role of race and racism (cite Dubois). Few studies explore how white children share, reproduce, and rework such beliefs in school contexts. This paper focuses on white adolescents’ perceptions in such environments as they interact with curricula, teachers, and peers to absorb, contest, and rework colorblind ideology. By drawing upon previous scholarship documenting white adolescents' perceptions in survey data, interviews, and ethnographic observations, analysts can understand the content of their narratives about racial identity, racism, and oppression.

Past studies on race and school contexts often recruit parents and teachers to report students' racial practices (e.g. interracial friendships, standing up to racism, etc.) and racial beliefs revealed through conversations (Onyekwuluje 2000; Hagerman 2017). Shifting the focus of this scholarship from parent's to children's perceptions can illuminate aspects of children's behaviors and beliefs that are often obstructed from their parents' view. Students' experiences in schools are one such example. Omi and Winant (1986, 67 cited in Thomas 2015) also point to the importance of understanding racial ideologies as a reciprocal process between "micro level and macro level social interactions." **analysts using child-centered methods can more easily develop existing theories about the reproduction of dominant racial ideologies and inform anti-racist teaching strategies and school policies** (Rogers 2021).

Since individuals' understandings of race evolve with age, I narrow the subject of this article to white adolescents. Throughout their lives, white individuals interact with the *white habitus*, a "racialized process of socialization" through which they develop beliefs, perceptions, tastes, and behaviors (Bonilla-Silva 2018, 73). The strength of the white habitus persists despite historical efforts towards racial integration as many white people continue to grow up in white neighborhoods, social networks, and schools. The socializing and racializing work of such environments, for example, helps explain how children develop a sense of racial identity at very young ages and prefer peers or toys based on race (Clark & Clark 1939; Aboud 1988; van Ausdale & Feagin 2001; Stokes-Guinan 2011). In schools specifically, messages about history transmit can reproduce “common sense” understandings of **racial inequality and power**. **Teacher** . Teachers can, for example, minimize the influence of racism with messages of abstract egalitarianism (e.g. “everyone is the same” and “race does not matter”). **By adolescence, individuals racial identities and beliefs crystallize and differentiate from the adults around them. One's teenage years, in short, are critical to identity formation and the construction of ideological attachments.**

To be sure, schools provide a limited view into the lives of adolescents. Past analyses have revealed the unique niches of parents, the media, and neighborhoods that are not easily separable from each other (Vitrup 2011). Likewise, studying adolescence alone ignores earlier life experiences that shape individuals' views and sense of self. As such, policies and practices intended to disrupt colorblindness must also target earlier stages of development (Hagerman 2020). Finally, since white individuals are socialized differently, conclusions from studies recruiting adolescents and their perceptions of schools cannot be generalized to white teenagers overall; factors like geographic region, class, sexual orientation, and gender also shape perceptions and beliefs about race and racism (Grossman 2009; Ghavami & Mistry 2019; Hatchell 2004). Despite these limitations, the material conditions produced by whiteness cannot be discounted; its allocation of privileges and resources in schools ultimately shapes narratives about race that many white adolescents share.

This paper begins with a review of racial and ethnic socialization, particularly among white adolescents, and directs it towards a discussion of how schools exist as race-making and socializing institutions. I then introduce . Synthesis of scholarship reveals that white adolescents’ racialized identities and socialization outside of classrooms inform their perceptions of American history. These

Background

In the United States, "race" is a dynamic social construction contingent on the country's unique history of white domination and the marginalization of African American, Asian American, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples (cite). Population geneticists contend that human variation does not satisfy discrete biological "races," yet race remains socially real (Royal ; Graves \_\_\_). Today, racialized practices and social relations continue to shape Americans' life outcomes across areas of housing, wealth accumulation, health, and education. While significant associations exist between race and educational outcomes, for instance, like graduation rates, grades, discipline, and educational attainment, they do not reflect racial groups' inherent characteristics. Instead, the "main effect" of race, as well as other racial measures, are sensitive to the social structure of American schools and society broadly.

Children learn about race before their school years through racial and ethnic socialization (RES), “a social, cognitive, and developmental process through which individuals transmit, negotiate and acquire beliefs, values, social norms and behaviors to engage appropriately with society” (Loyd & Gaither 2018, **page number**). Parents and other primary caregivers play a central role in RES early in childrens’ development. Throughout their lives, but especially during their children’s preschool and elementary school years, many White parents avoid conversations about race and racism, or communicate to their children that such issues should not be discussed (Bartoli et al., 2016; Pahlke et al., 2012; Vittrup, 2016). Despite their avoidance of “race talk,” children use their perceptions to comprehend racial inequality and racism. As early as 6 months in age, individuals can distinguish between different faces by race (Paulker et al. 2019; Spencer 2008). By middle childhood, these observations obtain stronger subjective relevance (). In the contemporary United States, primary school-aged children shift from explicit attitudes on race (e.g. “”) to subtler ones once they learn that it is less … Finally, adolescents crystallize these racial identities and use ideological frames to make sense of matters like racism, diversity, and racial privilege ().

One such ideology acquired by many individuals throughout socialization is colorblind or color-evasive ideology, which attributes racial inequality to non-racial phenomena [BE SPECIFIC]. Bonilla-Silva (2018) theorizes four "frames" of colorblindness, including abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. Abstract liberalism describes messages justifying racial inequality with the vague language of equal opportunity, individual freedom, and meritocracy. For example, some individuals use abstract liberalism to argue against school integration policies (e.g. bussing, redistricting) by framing them as violations of parent choice. The second frame, naturalization of racism, can be found in messages that attribute the exclusion of students of color from white peer networks to *self-segregation*, which Beverley Tatum discusses in *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*. [EXPLAIN MORE HERE]. Cultural racism levies stereotypes about communities of color to inequality. One such case of this frame arises in Hagerman's (2020, 184) interview with an adolescent girl who claimed that while "even a poor black kid could… move up," in society, Black childrens' success are hampered by Black families' supposedly-inferior financial habits.

As previous examples regarding school choice and peer networks suggest, colorblind messages circulate schools on an everyday basis. and influence children’s development of racial ideologies during their development. These ideas can be transmitted explicitly, in the case of prescribed educational content about history and literature, for example. However, they also exist more subtly in the communication between teachers and peers and students with each other. The rest of this paper focuses on these two former categories…

## Curricula

At the time of this article’s writing [**publication?**], American political discourse has intensified around the teaching of race and racism in public schools. This debate has gradually permeated all levels of government, from school board to city council meetings, state legislature sessions, and even Congress. Several state legislatures have passed laws banning teachers from discussing “divisive concepts” such as identities of race, gender, and sexual orientation (cite Alabama state law).

Despite their salience of today, discussions about racial identity, racism, and racial have always mattered in schools, whether mentioned explicitly or not (Thomas 2015). Analysts have long grappled with the fact that curricula, like any other social construction, exists within the hegemonic culture which produced it. In French primary schools, for example, the national government requires students to learn dining etiquette and proper nutrition during mealtimes. Concepts like manners and healthy food choices ultimately grapple with questions of national identity (e.g. “What is French?” and “How do the French behave?”) that must be decided by consensus. They also value the practices and interests of dominant groups in a similar manner as American educational standards about race and racism. Like social customs during dining, other subtle, unspoken lessons about society are still interpreted, reworked, and reproduced by children.

## Teachers

Today, more than three-quarters of high school teachers are white while students of color constitute more than half of total enrollment in American public schools (pew research 2018). ~~As racially diverse generations enter schools, teachers have reported more questions from students about race and ethnicity, particularly in context of American history. Teachers also make racialized evaluations of their students’ grades, behaviors, and academic potential, which contribute greatly to whether a student succeeds or fails.~~

Due to the increasing salience of race, racial inequality, and racism in schools, teachers’ interpretive frames of these issues often dictate how these matters are examined in classrooms. Most teachers report discussing racial inequality and racism with students but rarely do so in practice (Epstein \_\_\_; Vitrup 2016). Recent studies reveal that around 70 percent of teachers ascribe to colorblindness, a figure comparable to the overall adult population (Vitrup 2016; Hazelbaker & Mistry 2021). Little variation exists in the use of colorblind messages between white, Black, and Latinx teachers. Therefore, given the prevalence of color-evasive messages in classrooms, it is worth considering how white adolescents perceive them (Festritzer 2011). Teachers can equip colorblind frames during formal instruction, for example, while teaching units about history. Their ideology can also appear in their appraisals and differential treatment of students. In both formal and informal interactions with teachers, white adolescents are exposed to racial ideological positions that they can reproduce, rework, or contest.

**Header** history?

At the time of this article’s writing [**publication?**], American political discourse has intensified around the teaching of race and racism in public schools. Anxieties from white adults that their children are being indoctrinated by certain racial frameworks, like critical race theory, has been interpreted as a backlash to a period of racial reckoning in following the death of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, and other Black individuals. This debate has gradually permeated all levels of government, from school board to city council meetings, state legislature sessions, and even Congress. Several state legislatures have passed laws banning teachers from discussing “divisive concepts” such as identities of race, gender, and sexual orientation (cite Alabama state law), often explicitly regarding the teaching of American history.

Despite their salience of today, discussions about racial identity, racism, and racial have always mattered in schools, whether mentioned explicitly or not (Thomas 2015). Literature about the effect of pedagogy on white adolescents’ interpretations of history can be grouped into three categories: their views on the role of different racial groups in American development, categorizations of interactions between groups across history, and perceptions of groups belonging in a collective, national identity. As mentioned previously, many teachers report discussing race in their classrooms yet seldom do so in practice. This principle appears prominently in teachers’ portrayal of European-Americans as the leaders, inventors, and drivers of history. For example, excluding Sacagawea in the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804, many teachers omit individual Indigenous people from American post-colonial history (cite). As a result, white adolescents tend to discuss American Indians using past-tense phrases like “lived in teepees,” “some lived in longhouses,” or “they fished and grew plants or had different religions” (Epstein 2009, 61). This assumption draws upon Cook-Lynn’s (2001) theory of “anti-Indianism,” which describes that which treats American Indians and their tribes as if they no longer exist. (Cook-Lynn 2001). Hatchell’s (2004, **page number**) analysis of anti-Indian pedagogy also points to the effect of anti-Indianism on white adolescents. Despite white adolescents’ sympathy towards these groups after learning about European violence and colonialization, victimization alone prevents individuals from viewing Indigenous people as important historical actors, which in turn leads to confusion once introduced to contemporary tribal claims to rights, land, and resources.

Like Native Americans, Black Americans are often categorized by history teachers as victims, their contributions to American development excluded. Such pedagogical approaches, revealed through teachers’ language and omissions, support the minimization of racism frame in colorblind ideology. For instance, aside from the Civil Rights Movement, African Americans are casted as passive recipients of enslavement and segregation. White teachers usually exclude the history of anti-Black violence for fear of upsetting Black students, as well as Black organizations’ resistance to the violence (Brown & Brown 2010). In an ethnography of one eleventh grade classroom, teachers noticed their students’ familiarity with Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks and dedicated lessons to both figures. Their lessons emphasized the abstract liberal idea that Civil Rights Leader made everyone equal

Epstein’s ethnography of eleventh grade classrooms were portrayed as victims. On the other hand, teachers ignored

in white adolescents’ pre-instruction interviews (Cook-Lynn).

which serve member of an Indigenous organizing group, argues that this history The idea that Indigenous Thus, White adolescents also focus on Black Americans

Commenters have argued equating racial and cultural groups can ignore the underlying power imbalances that exist with racial structures

multicultural or “culturally-relevant” pedagogies can

Compared to Black teachers, for example, white teachers’ appraisals of their students’ likelihood of postsecondary attainment, classroom behavior, and preparedness for advanced courses tend to favor white students over Black students (). It was only recently that the substantial body of research on

Outside of the teaching of history, students also confront messages of colorblindness through differential treatment by teachers. As early as elementary school, individuals can perceive differences in evaluations between themselves and others from their instructors, which in turn shapes their self-esteem. The large body of research on teacher expectancy reveals both their tangible and psychological effects, for instance, on their test scores (Sorhagan 2013), school discipline (Souham & Hoover 2013), graduation rates, as well as self-esteem, resistance to stereo**types, etc.**

Brophy and Good’s (1970) model theorizes teacher expectancy through four prongs: (1) teachers’ evaluations of classroom performance (e.g. grades, manners, and test scores), (2) student groupings during classroom instruction, (3) students’ construction of self-concept in relation to differential treatment, and (4) continuity in teachers’ expectations over time. Since the Brophy and Good model, analysts have observed the racialized dimension of teacher expectancy. Not only do teachers evaluate their students based on race, but the raci