1 INTRODUCTION

"Children are our future." We have heard this saying many times, haven't we? Songs have even been written about it. Packed into this four-word cliché is the idea that society needs to invest in its children. Society ought to provide the support, knowledge, and skills members of the next generation will need one day when they are in control and responsible for strong, healthy, advancing communities.

Now when we actually look at a variety of social and economic "outcomes" for young people in the United States, what do we find? We learn that our society seems to consider some young people more vital to our future than others. In particular, *society invests in young white people more than young people of color.* This is evident in a variety of arenas. For example, white youth are more likely to have health coverage than racial and ethnic minority youth.[1] More money is spent on the education of white youth than on youth of color. Up-to-date computers and the Internet are more easily accessed by white youth than racial and ethnic minority youth, resulting in youth of color being left behind in the Digital Age.[2]

Of course, other factors, particularly *class*, influence society's investment in young people. But even before the United States was a country, people have been organized primarily around *race* and *ethnicity*. These characteristics have in many ways dictated people's upward socioeconomic mobility. Most of us are well aware of the United States' history of slavery, followed by Jim Crow in the South. But it is also true that neighborhoods and suburbs in the North orchestrated what amounted to segregation by adopting policies that prevented homeowners from selling to African-Americans. With few exceptions, labor unions limited African-Americans' opportunities to jobs with the least chance for

advancement and the lowest pay.[3] Latinos and Asians were also systematically ghettoized, particularly across the West. Housing opportunities for Latinos and Asians were often limited to company-owned tenements.[4]

State and federal governments facilitated practices that subordinated African-Americans, Latinos, and Asians. For instance, until 1870 only free whites (for a time there were whites in the United States who were indentured servants and therefore not "free") could naturalize as citizens of the United States, at which time naturalization rights expanded to include people of African descent. (But it was not until 1952 that all racial or ethnic qualifiers were lifted to make people of *any* racial or ethnic background potentially eligible for citizenship.[5]) California passed a law in 1852 that taxed the work of foreign miners only, most of whom were Chinese and Mexican, who could not naturalize as citizens.[6] The federal government passed the National Origins Act in 1924, which fully excluded immigration by Asians to the United States, something no other racial or ethnic group has experienced in this country. The government also conducted mass deportations of Mexicans, both immigrants and United States citizens, during the first half of the twentieth century.[7] These laws and public practices marginalized people of color and validated, if not encouraged, private racism and discrimination.

Beginning in the 1950s, however, federal legislatures passed laws banning racial and ethnic discrimination in immigration, housing, and the workplace, removing many of the mechanisms that organized people's lives along racial and ethnic lines. Since then, formal racial prejudice has declined steadily.[8] People of color have occupied some of the most powerful positions in our institutions in recent decades, such as CEOs, mayors, and most recently the presidency. Still, race and ethnicity continue to be central forces in American life, influencing where people live, work, and attend school and how they spend their leisure time. And so, while racial disparities have narrowed over the past forty years, persistent gaps in education, wealth, power, and health and well-being still exist between groups of different racial and ethnic backgrounds in America. It is just that *the practices that perpetuate racial and ethnic inequality have become subtle and more covert.*[9]

Much of the contemporary research on racial inequality emphasizes the experiences of people after they have reached adulthood. Some studies point to culture as the primary reason for these continued disparities,[10] others focus on social networks.[11] Racist and prejudicial attitudes, as well as institutional

discrimination, are common explanations.[12] Macrolevel changes, such as major shifts in the economy, are seen by some researchers as the main impetus for racial inequality among adults.[13]

In this book we take another approach. We look at the experiences of people *before* they become adults, in particular young people between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Our intent is to understand the "precursors to racialized outcomes"; that is, we ask, *Does society differentially invest in youth of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, thereby predisposing them to follow certain paths and fulfill particular roles in society as adults?* Are white, Asian-American, African-American, and Latino teens socialized—that is, taught how to live in society—in different ways? If so, what effects do these different socialization experiences have on youth of various racial and ethnic backgrounds? And *how might these different experiences reproduce, or perpetuate, racial and ethnic inequalities?*

Focusing on four key social institutions, the *family, peers, school,* and *religion,* we argue in this book that youth of different racial and ethnic backgrounds are indeed socialized in different ways. This is in part because these institutions are themselves already racialized. They are often racially segregated. And more important, race really impacts how people experience life—their relationships, opportunities, and physical and social environment—in these institutions. The segregated institutions of families, peer groups, schools, and religious organizations produce distinct cultures and structures that reflect the social situations of the various racial and ethnic groups. In stating this, we are affirming the abundance of existing literature briefly sampled above (see Notes 10–13) that focuses on racial disparities among *adults*. Nevertheless, African-American, Asian-American, white, and Latino youth experience particular socialization processes that have been forged within disparate social conditions. The racialized experiences of youth produce advantages and disadvantages that arguably lead to unequal outcomes for youth and, later, for adults. We acknowledge that youth within a given racial or ethnic group are exposed to a diverse array of social structural experiences, and that there is no such thing as a typical experience for white, African-American, Latino, or Asian-American teenagers.[14] Still, our findings reveal that *teen socialization experiences follow distinct racial and ethnic patterns within families, schools, religious organizations, and peer groups, which persist across class and geographic lines*. These patterns have direct implications for the quality of teens' lives as well as their life chances as adults.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEENS' LIVES

It may seem logical, or even obvious, that teens of one racial or ethnic group or another are at an advantage or disadvantage in relation to teens of other groups in their preparation for involvement in the American socioeconomic system. We believe the implications for teens, and their futures, is more complex than that statement may imply. We would not want to assert that teens of different racial or ethnic identities are simply "different" in how they are socialized and leave it at that. Nor would we conclude that the four areas that we investigate in this book—family, peers, schools, and religion—in acting as socializing agents, merely help to pass on the cultural values and social roles of American society to teenagers, although this is certainly partly true. Instead, we believe a better way to think about how teenagers are prepared for participation in American society is to rethink "socialization" in a much broader frame, one that includes not only the reproduction of cultural values and roles but also the idea that teens are building "stores of capital"—something we call *capital portfolios*—through the way they experience the world. Capital portfolios are packages of investments which include cultural, social, human, and religious capital (analogous, say, to stock investments). They contain resources teens can access in their current and future participation in American society; they are also related to the reproduction of inequalities inherent in the American socioeconomic system.

We return to the idea of capital portfolios in more depth in the concluding chapter. For now, we want to suggest that the concept of capital (and our use of it in arguing that teens tend to build capital portfolios containing different mixes of types of capital, stemming at least partly from race or ethnicity) is an important theoretical tool which can uncover hidden processes that serve to reproduce social inequality in society. In this we follow Amanda Lewis, who argues that understanding capital is important because it "challenges one of the dominant narratives for understanding educational success and failure—the ideology of meritocracy: people are understood to be successful solely because of their individual efforts and abilities."[15] Capital here is considered a resource to be used in advancing one's position in particular social contexts.[16] However, we move beyond Lewis in suggesting that the different forms of capital teens may develop may have both positive and negative effects in the larger scheme of teens' lives, and that some forms of capital may purchase more benefits in the larger socioeconomic system than others.

We will argue that teens, indeed children from the earliest ages, are building stores of capital—social, cultural, human, and religious—through experiences in their families, schools, religious organizations, and among peers. They will draw on these stores and put them to use as they come of age and enter the American socioeconomic system. Further, as teens differentially experience the world through family, peer relationships, school, and their involvement with religious institutions, their capital portfolio is being built with its particular mix of amounts and types of social, cultural, human, and religious capital. The particular mix yields different dividends in success, types of jobs, status, personal well-being, or other payoffs, and it varies by individual; yet that individual variation is bounded by the types of capital that tend to be developed within different racial and ethnic groups. Our position is not that there is one standardized capital portfolio for each racial or ethnic group—there is in fact considerable diversity in the investment by individuals within each group. We do suggest, however, that the capital portfolios which teens develop, and which they and others invest in, tend to follow distinct racial or ethnic patterns. *By uncovering the components of youths' capital portfolios and the socialization processes that produce them, we will better understand the sources of racial and ethnic disparities in American life.*

STUDIES ON RACE, ETHNICITY, AND YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

Several books have studied youth in the United States and how race and ethnicity matter in their lives. These studies have largely focused on racial and ethnic "identity formation" among youth of color; how youth of color participate in this process; and the role of race and ethnicity in youths' lives. Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, for example, focus on the ways in which Asian-American youth construct and perform their own unique culture, and ethnic and racial identities.[17] In *Asian American Youth*, these authors discuss how Asian-American youth must perform this process in a society where they are simultaneously invisible and forced to combat racial stereotypes, such as the model minority, the gangbanger, and the perpetual foreigner. They also find that Asian-American youth construct their identities in response to those of their immigrant parents, whom they often view as constrictive, backward, and un-American. Since these youth are more acculturated than their parents, they become American by using tools from both Asian and American cultures.

Another example is Beverly Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting To-*

gether in the Cafeteria?[18] Tatum explores the role of self-segregation among youth of color, especially black adolescents, as she constructs what it means to be of a racial minority within a society that is as race conscious as the United States. She contends that self-segregation is a positive developmental action for African-American youth, even necessary, for developing a strong sense of belonging.

We do not address racial and ethnic identity formation among American youth. But what we take away from studies such as these is that Asian-American, African-American, and Latino youth construct distinct racial and ethnic identities in response to their unique social experiences and location. Being a youth of color who is being raised in, for instance, an immigrant family versus a native-born family, has different meanings and implies different tools for negotiating one's identity in society. Yet in other ways, all youth of color must deal with similar mechanisms imposed on them by the dominant society. Mechanisms such as racial and ethnic stereotypes, which mark youth as not normative, influence how they think of themselves.

Similarly with socialization, we find that African-American, Asian-American, and Latino youth experience unique processes that produce distinct advantages and disadvantages for their lives. Their individual capital portfolios are quite varied as a result. In other ways, there is a clearer white-nonwhite dichotomy in socialization processes. This division results in white youth possessing valuable forms of capital that are less available to African-American, Asian-American, and Latino youth; the reverse may pertain in forms of capital that are more common among youth of color and rarer among white youth.

We are interested in understanding the racialized socialization experiences among youth and their *potential* effect on eventual adult outcomes; in short, how race and ethnicity might affect socialization and its outcomes. Most studies on race, ethnicity, and youth have not emphasized these sorts of relationships. When there has been an attempt to explain these processes, the studies tend to focus exclusively on the family or draw conclusions about youth in general that are based largely on samples of white youth.[19] But there are notable exceptions.

Annette Lareau, for example, in her book *Unequal Childhoods,* draws on eighty-eight interviews with third- and fourth-grade children at two schools, one located in a working-class community and another in a middle-class community.[20] The children were African-American and white and came from poor, working-class, and middle-class families. Lareau's research team also conduct-

ed intensive ethnographic studies, which involved sustained observation of and interaction with twelve families of children in the interview sample. She argues that social class plays a much larger role than race in how families raise their children. Middle-class parents prepare their children for socioeconomic advancement in adulthood by engaging in what she calls *concerted cultivation.* Provided with a wealth of experiences in adult-organized nonfamily activities, such as sports, music lessons, and summer camps, middle-class children not only develop important skills but also learn to see adults as equals, share their thoughts with and make demands of those in authority, and expect to be served by institutions. In contrast, Lareau finds that working-class parents do not engage in concerted cultivation; instead, they emphasize obedience to parents and allow for long periods of unstructured time with family and extended family rather than in organized outside activities, a socialization pattern which she calls the *accomplishment of natural growth.* Both methods of child-rearing have advantages and disadvantages, according to Lareau: the overscheduled lifestyle of soccer games, band camps, and dance recitals may better prepare middle-class children for success at school than their lower-class counterparts, but they are also likely to be more stressed. The working-class and poor kids, in contrast, may have closer family ties but sometimes miss participating in extracurricular activities. From these findings Lareau argues that schools and other institutions need to be more realistic about the limited educational resources many parents enjoy and more sensitive to the second parenting style.

Although *Unequal Childhoods* focuses primarily on family socialization processes, the up-close-and-personal view into the worlds of poor, working-, and middle-class African-American and white families provides a valuable, detailed understanding of how families teach their children in the United States. We draw on Lareau's conceptual framework to begin to make sense of how families socialize their adolescent children. But we depart from Lareau in several ways. The family is a central agent of socialization for young people; however, other institutions also play key roles. By examining youth's experiences with school, religion, and peers, in addition to the family, we gain a more complete understanding of how society invests in youth and prepares them for future roles. Moreover, we are looking at adolescents. During this stage of life, institutions outside the family become increasingly important to young people's sense of self, their understanding of the world, and their place in it. As the final stage of childhood prior to becoming an adult, adolescence and its socialization experiences are more predictive of adult outcomes than those of third- and fourth-

graders. We also depart from Lareau in our emphasis on race and ethnicity. As discussed above, race and ethnicity have been the main factors organizing human relations and social outcomes in the United States. Further, the meanings of class status differ by race and ethnicity. This is evident among the experiences of adolescents. In *Black Picket Fences*, for example, Mary Pattillo-McCoy reveals how being an African-American middle-class youth differs from being a white middle-class youth.[21] Black youths' opportunities for upward mobility are constrained compared to white youths', particularly since the macroeconomic conditions that spurred their parents into the middle class no longer exist. Thus, African-American middle-class youth are more inclined to live in socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods, exposing them to greater criminal deviance and greater negative consequences.

Still, class is an important factor in the socialization experiences of youth. Our analysis does not dispute the role of class. Nor do our data allow a test to determine which is more important, race or class, in the socialization experiences of youth. The data do show, however, that race and ethnicity have an effect independent of class. For example, as we will show, our statistical analyses reveal that when controlling for income (and other demographic factors), racial differences are still large and significant. Our analysis of different subgroups further reveals that while factors like parental authority and family responsibility are a common facet of families of color, they get played out in very different ways depending on the particular racial or ethnic group. So, while we recognize the importance of class for youth, there is considerable evidence that race and ethnicity influence the mobility trajectories of youth.

Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation, by Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, is an impressive study of second-generation youth in the United States from varied racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.[22] Drawing on ethnographies, as well as survey and school-level data, this book explores the world of second-generation youth, looking at patterns of parent-child conflict and cohesion within immigrant families, the role of peer groups and school subcultures, and factors affecting academic achievement, among other areas of adolescent life, to understand the process of socioeconomic mobility for recent immigrants. A central finding of *Legacies* is that the immigrant experience varies considerably. The acculturation process is much smoother for certain immigrant groups because society welcomes and privileges them over other immigrants. In addition to culture, socioeconomic status, and immigrant community networks and resources, race (or what the authors refer

to as "color") is a primary factor affecting the extent to which immigrants are incorporated into American society. Immigrants who more closely look like the dominant group are, as Portes and Rumbaut put it, "chosen" to acculturate and ushered toward an easier trajectory of upward socioeconomic mobility.

Portes and Rumbaut highlight the complexity of mobility for second-generation youth in America. In our study we build on *Legacies* by focusing on the role of race and ethnicity in the socialization processes of American youth as we explore the views and experiences of immigrant and native-born adolescents. We also address immigrant "generation status," particularly for Latinos. We find, for example, that for Latino youth the greatest distinction in generation status is between the second and third generation. Additionally, we explore the role of religion in the lives of youth. Religion is central to the culture, identity, and social cohesion of communities of color because, in the United States, it has consistently been the main institution where minority groups can exercise full control. Our findings demonstrate how religious organizations and networks invest in youth and make valuable contributions to their capital portfolios.

One study on race and socialization experiences of students, which has been controversial but influential, is John Ogbu's qualitative study *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb*.[23] The youth in his study attended high school in the affluent Shaker Heights suburb of Cleveland. While the academic performance of African-American youth in Shaker Heights was above the state and national averages for African-American teens, it was markedly lower than that of white peers in their school. Ogbu aims to make sense of why African-American students, who seemingly have the resources and life conditions conducive to academic success, still perform far below their white counterparts. He argues that the peer culture of African-American youth discourages academic excellence. African-American youth are ambivalent about achieving academic success because it is perceived as "acting white." Several scholars disagree with Ogbu's claims, finding that African-American youth, as well as Latino youth, care as much or more about doing well in school as their white peers.[24] We too find little evidence for Ogbu's position, which we discuss in Chapter 4. Still, Ogbu's work has pushed our thinking on the influence of peers on the academic views and experiences of minority youth.

OVERVIEW OF BOOK

This study uses a multimethod approach to understand the socialization experiences of youth in America. We draw primarily on the National Study of

Youth and Religion (NSYR). The NSYR, based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, includes survey data generated from a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 U.S. English- and Spanish-speaking teenagers between the ages of thirteen and seventeen and their parents in 2002 and 2003, and 267 in-depth interviews from a subsample of the adolescents who participated in the survey (some of whom turned eighteen by the time the interviews were conducted). The survey and in-depth interviews explore a wide range of topics, including religion, family life, dating and sex, school experiences, peer relations, drug use, entertainment, future aspirations, and other topics. In our analysis, the survey data serve as a first-cut determination of the largest differences and similarities among African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and white youth. The interviews provide engaging, visceral accounts and deep insights into how teens from these four largest racial and ethnic groups in America experience family, school, religious, and peer life. *By examining nationally representative survey data along with in-depth interviews, we provide an intimate yet comprehensive view of the racialized socialization experiences of youth in the United States today.* (See Appendix A for more on methodology.)

   We now move on to the four chapters on family, peers, school, and religion. In Chapter 2, building on previous research, we propose four types of family socialization patterns. These patterns reflect the importance families place on autonomy, authority, community, and success, and the processes families engage in to instill these values in their children. Chapter 3 looks at how peers matter in youths' lives. Compared to youth of color, white youth are given greater autonomy to spend more time with their peers. This makes white youth more susceptible to deviant behaviors, which can pose threats to their well-being. Chapter 4 highlights the connection between teacher-student relationships and youths' academic views. White youths' experiences show that schools, through teachers, provide important resources that privilege them academically in the short and long run. In Chapter 5 we show how religious institutions, beliefs, and practices serve to reinforce what teens have learned in the other institutional spheres of their lives, in particular how teens of different racial or ethnic groups relate to authority and hierarchies, and how they are expected to participate within the religious organization.

   Each of these chapters explores how youth in America experience and think about the institution examined. With the survey results as a backdrop, we focus on what young people have shared about their lives during the interviews. Near the beginning of each chapter, we tell the stories of four persons with different

racial or ethnic backgrounds. Altogether then, the stories introduce you to six-teen of the adolescents interviewed in the study. We highlighted the stories of these teenagers not because they are typical or representative of their particular racial or ethnic group—there is no such thing. Instead, we chose these youths' accounts because their experiences underscore certain aspects of family, school, religious, or peer life that, according to the survey and interview data, follow distinct racial or ethnic patterns. Taken together, the stories also demonstrate similarities among youth across differing racial and ethnic backgrounds and, conversely, variation among youth of the same race or ethnicity.

In the concluding chapter we return to the discussion of how youths' capital portfolios are constructed. Citing examples from previous chapters, we look at the inputs institutions make into youths' capital portfolios and the social divi-dends that result. We suggest that African-American, Asian-American, Latino, and white youth are endowed with various kinds and amounts of capital. It is not the case that white youth are generally better off in all areas of life relative to youth of color. It is rather that the dominant society often makes available to white youth those forms of capital that it *values*. And society is structured such that white youth are better situated to receive returns on those valued forms of capital, returns that are perceived as being more important. This is where and why racial inequality, particularly socioeconomic racial inequality, persists, we propose. Yet youth of color are endowed with capital that is largely absent from the portfolios of white youth. These forms of capital protect and prepare youth of color in ways that are not accessible to white youth. This capi-tal is constructed in part as a response to their racial and ethnic communities' subordinate position in the dominant social structure, but it also arises out of differing community worldviews and perspectives.

Unfolding in the following pages are rich firsthand accounts of the different social worlds inhabited by teens of different racial and ethnic groups in Amer-ica. You will hear teens in their own voice describe their conflicts with parents, pressures from other teens, teachers who have influenced their self-esteem, and religious beliefs that drive their understanding of the world. It is our hope that these voices will reveal the challenges and triumphs of adolescents today, and bring to light the impact of race and ethnicity on the resources available to youth as they move toward adulthood.