



Shades of White: White Kids and Racial Identities in High School

Pamela Perry

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What does it mean to be young, American, and white at the dawn of the twenty-first century? By exploring this question and revealing the everyday social processes by which high schoolers define white identities, Pamela Perry offers much-needed insights into the social construction of race and whiteness among youth. Through ethnographic research and in-depth interviews of students in two demographically distinct U.S. high schools—one suburban and predominantly white; the other urban, multiracial, and minority white—Perry shares students' candor about race and self-identification. By examining the meanings students attached (or didn't attach) to their social lives and everyday cultural practices, including their taste in music and clothes, she shows that the ways white students defined white identity were not only markedly different between the two schools but were considerably diverse and ambiguous within them as well. Challenging reductionist notions of whiteness and white racism, this study suggests how we might go "beyond whiteness" to new directions in antiracist activism and school reform.

Shades of White is emblematic of an emerging second wave of whiteness studies that focuses on the racial identity of whites. It will appeal to scholars and students of anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies, as well as to those involved with high school education and antiracist activities.

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