



City Kids: Transforming Racial Baggage (Rutgers Series in Childhood Studies)

Maria Kromidas Ph.D

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Cosmopolitanism—the genuine appreciation of cultural and racial diversity—is often associated with adult worldliness and sophistication. Yet, as this innovative new book suggests, children growing up in multicultural environments might be the most cosmopolitan group of all.

City Kids profiles fifth-graders in one of New York City’s most diverse public schools, detailing how they collectively developed a sophisticated understanding of race that challenged many of the stereotypes, myths, and commonplaces they had learned from mainstream American culture. Anthropologist Maria Kromidas spent over a year interviewing and observing these young people both inside and outside the classroom, and she vividly relates their sometimes awkward, often playful attempts to bridge cultural rifts and reimagine racial categories. Kromidas looks at how children learned race in their interactions with each other and with teachers in five different areas—navigating urban space, building friendships, carrying out schoolwork, dealing with the school’s disciplinary policies, and enacting sexualities. The children’s interactions in these areas contested and reframed race. Even as Kromidas highlights the lively and quirky individuals within this super-diverse group of kids, she presents their communal ethos as a model for convivial living in multiracial settings.

By analyzing practices within the classroom, school, and larger community, *City Kids* offers advice on how to nurture kids’ cosmopolitan tendencies, making it a valuable resource for educators, parents, and anyone else who is concerned with America’s deep racial divides. Kromidas not only examines how we can teach children about antiracism, but also considers what they might have to teach us.

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