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The Consequences of 'Choice': Experiencing Youth Peer Culture in a Racial and Ethnic Integration School Reform

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The Consequences of 'Choice': Experiencing Youth Peer Culture in a Racial and Ethnic Integration School Reform

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Abstract

Since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, racial and ethnic diversity and integration as well as educational equality has become a prominent consideration for American educational policy. While attempts have been made to increase integration, reforms have often fallen short due to residential segregation and choices spurred by parental privilege. These racial and ethnic integration reforms have had effects on individuals and communities; yet, the young people who daily experience these reforms are not having their voices heard. Therefore, this qualitative analysis examines how young people of color perceive and experience a racial and ethnic integration reform, especially with regards to their friendships and peer cultures as these are central to their well-being and happiness. A subsample of 20 young people was selected from a larger qualitative research project. The sample consisted of 10 girls and 10 boys, 15-18 years old, who self-identified as African American, Latino/a, Jamaican American, Multi-Racial/Multi-Ethnic, or White. These 20 young people attended 18 inter-district and intra-district schools in a Northeastern metropolitan area in the U.S. that is undergoing a racial and ethnic integration educational reform. The findings show that young people's peer cultures and friendships were often in transition due to an adult-dominated lottery experience. They actively had to navigate differences in race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, which either resulted in positive or negative interactions, depending on the context. Furthermore, young people often employed a good kid/bad kid binary to make meaning of the educational inequalities they witnessed.

Keywords: education reform, school choice, racial and ethnic integration, friendship, peer cultures

Friendship…is most necessary for living. Nobody would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other good things…

— Aristotle (1976), *The Nicomachean Ethics*

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Jaclyn, a 15-year-old Latina girl explained the difficulty she faced in her school

transition: "It's different because it's not kids you've grown up with that you're going to school

with. Its different kids. Like, *they've* grown up together. So, it's like you're the outside kid."

Jaclyn ended up transitioning schools with little social support due to the racial and ethnic

integration reform implemented by Greenville Cities that grew out of a major United States

(U.S.) Supreme Court case.[1] With the passing of *Brown v. Board* in 1954, racial and ethnic

diversity and educational equality became a prominent consideration for American educational

policy (Clotfelter, 2004; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Lankford & Wyckoff, 2000). While this

case eventually influenced Greenville Cities' reform, there has been difficulty in actually

achieving integration across the country. In the past 60 years, there has been little change.

Specifically, since the 1990's, segregation has been increasing; Black students are more

segregated today than they were in 1970, and Latino/a students are significantly more segregated

than Blacks in suburban America (Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, & Kuscera, 2014). Schools, in turn,

have continually remained powerful institutions that reproduce inequality. Attempts at reform

have proved difficult as residential and socio-economic segregation drastically influences the

way in which public schools are funded.[2]

These structural inequalities greatly disadvantage the young people who live in these

communities. In order to compensate for the unequal distribution of quality schools, families

have adjusted their education plans for their children to secure greater resources and

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[1] For participants' and the youth centers' confidentiality, 'Greenville Cities' is used as a pseudonym for the metropolitan area where young people lived.
[2] In 2004-05, the U.S. Department of education stated that 83 cents out of every dollar spent on education came from state and local governments (45.6 percent from state funds and 37.1 percent from local governments). The federal government paid for 8.3 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

opportunities, and local authorities have instituted policies to equitably distribute access to quality education. In the past, the U.S. has tried controversial policies like mandatory busing programs. More recently, however, the concept of 'school choice' has emerged as the newest potential solution to an enduring system of inequality. Jaclyn, is a product of this school choice system. The ability to access and manipulate this system, however, requires families to possess appropriate cultural and social capital. Furthermore, while much has been written about the factors of school choice and the integrative school experience for individuals and communities with consideration of race and class, this knowledge is primarily informed by quantitative data, such as test scores or changing demographic data.

Therefore, it is important to know the social implications and lived experiences for the young people who are caught between public policy, adult authorities, historical residential segregation, and the ongoing debate of *if* quality education is a right or a privilege. It is important to fully acknowledge the consequences of these choices. While academic outcomes of integration programs are important, we have lost sight of what is critical and meaningful in the day-to-day lives of young people. In turn, through twenty semi-structured interviews with girls and boys, 15-18 years old, who self-identified as African American, Latino/a, Jamaican American, and Multi-racial/ethnic, this paper aims to create a platform to hear the voices of students of color who are so often caught in the cross fire of 'choice'. Here, they share with us their conceptual idea of friendship, the way in which their friendships have shifted, how they navigate differences, and the lived realities of growing up in a school system experiencing a racial and ethnic reform. Before presenting the findings, however, it is important to know the background of the problem and the literature on friendship.

Literature Review

In order to understand the context in which these young people are experiencing life we must review the literature on friendship, young people's racial identities, and school choice. [3]

Friendship, Race, and Identity in School

   Adolescent friendships serve as social capital and can have different values depending on the context (Crosnoe, Cavanagh & Elder, 2003). The literature explains the importance of friendship, how friendship choices are made, and how residential and school mobility affect friendships. While the literature on friendship and race is mixed, it is clear that race and ethnicity are significant in the structure of adolescents' social worlds and friendships (Rude & Herda, 2010). Here, the literature on interracial friendships and individual's racial identities will also be reviewed.

   The Importance of Friendship. Adolescent friendships are important for well-being as they are a consistent correlate of happiness (Demir, Özen, & Dogan, 2012; Workum, Scholte, Cillessen, Lodder, & Giletta, 2013). Friendship can influence individual's well-being, especially with concern to social anxiety (Siegel, la Greca & Harrison, 2009; Van Zalk, Van Zalk, Kerr & Stattin, 2011). In addition to affecting happiness and social anxiety, adolescent friendships have proven to have strong effects on behavioral choices and academic choices of individuals (Crosnoe, Cavanagh & Elder, 2003; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004; Shin & Ryan, 2014; Unlu, Sahin & Wan, 2014; Witkow & Fuligni, 2010).

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[3] As inspired by Skelton (2008), I use the term 'young people' rather than 'children', 'adolescent', or 'youth' where appropriate. I made this choice in language to actively avoid further marginalization or silencing. I aim to recognize young people's agency and integral worth. When reviewing and matching debates in the literature, however, I have adopted the dominant terminology to avoid confusion.

Academic achievement is central in the study of adolescence and is influenced by friendship and other social factors. It has been found that achievement goals and grade point averages (GPAs) are influenced by in-school friends (Shin & Ryan, 2014; Witkow & Fuligni, 2010). Having friends who liked school, had high academic achievement, or were of a high socioeconomic status (SES) made it less likely for adolescents to have academic problems, regardless of race (Clark, 2011; Crosnoe, Cavanagh & Elder, 2003). When accounting for school disadvantage, however, academically engaged friends were no longer protective against academic problems (Crosnoe, Cavanagh & Elder, 2003). The racial and ethnic composition of schools, and the opportunities within schools affects the academic characteristics of friends; in turn, if Black and Latinos/as attended schools with equal opportunities and resources as Whites, they would be just as likely to have high-achieving friends (Flashman, 2012). Research shows that in addition to achievement, perceptions of school environments are also heavily influenced by social factors, specifically including in-school friendship, social support, positive interracial interactions, student-teacher interactions, and ethnic identity (Booth et al., 2014; Anderson, Sabatelli, & Kosutic, 2007; Carter, 2006; Hallinan, Kubitschek, & Liu, 2009; Ram & Rumberger, 2008; Slaughter Defoe & Carlson, 1996; Witkow and Fuligni, 2010; Zirkel, 2002).

Friendship Choices, Types and Transitions. While friendship choices change over time and are impacted by life events, they predominantly occur within contexts of similarity and are influenced by age, marital status, and social classes (Bishop et al. 2003; Pahl & Pevalin, 2005; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, & Tolson, 1998). Reciprocated friendships and activities are important in adolescent friendship selection, as well as similarities in attitudes and behavior patterns (Bishop et al., 2003; Urberg, Degirmencioglu, & Tolson, 1998; Young, 2011). Friendships types and different levels of friendship intimacy, commitment, stability and closeness are often

influenced by gender, race, and ethnicity (Branje, Frijins, Finkenauerm Engels & Meeus, 2007).

For example, Way and colleagues (2001) found that there are four different types of same-sex

friendships: ideal, engaged, average, and disengaged. They found that girls and Latinos/as were

most likely to have 'ideal' friendships, and that boys and Asian Americans were most likely to

have 'disengaged' friendships. Way and Chen (2000) found that there are gender and

racial/ethnic differences in both the qualities and characteristics of adolescent friendships,

depending on if they were close or general friends. Furthermore, women and girls are more

likely to have high expectations of their friendships with regard to trust and intimacy, and are

more likely than men and boys to emphasize emotional closeness, with variation across girlhood

contexts (Berndt, 1982; Cavanaugh, 2004; Felmlee, Sweet, & Sinclair, 2012; Rajiva, 2006).

Often, young people find their friendships and peer cultures in transition as they are

subject to residential or school mobility. Residential and school mobility have varied effects on

the structure of adolescents' friendship networks and peer cultures, but recently mobile

adolescents tend to have "small, dense networks" and often "occupy less central and less

prestigious positions in their networks" (Brooks, 2002; South & Haynie, 2004, p. 315).

Developmentally salient friendships, self-esteem characteristics, district organization, and

enduring middle school friendships have been shown to be protective against low academic

achievement and are important in smoothly adapting to new schools (Aikins, Bierman & Parker,

2005; Langenkamp, 2010).

Most of this research on the importance and conceptualization of friendship has been

with predominantly White, middle-class young people. Moving forward, therefore, it is

necessary to address this gap in the literature and the continuance of privilege in the research

process. Therefore, it is important to address this gap and understand the way that young people

of color conceptualize friendship, make friendship choices, and experience friendship in times of transition especially with regards to residential and school mobility. Therefore, it is important to ask: *How do young people of color conceptualize friendship, make friendship choices, and experiences friendship in transition due to residential and school mobility?* In order to understand the context of this research question, we also must review the role of race and ethnicity in friendship choices and stability.

Interracial and Intraracial Friendships. Young people tend to choose friends who share their same race or ethnicity (Leszczensky & Pink, 2015; Ueno, 2009; Zeng & Xie, 2008). This is because race is still a salient consideration in friendship as those who have similar racial or ethnic backgrounds often share similar values "associated with social capital, such as trust, reciprocity, emotional support, community, and identity" (Graham et al., 1998; Reynolds, 2007, p. 383). Mouw and Entwisle (2006) argue, however, that racial friendship segregation in schools is also the result of residential segregation across schools.

The literature indicates that the effect of friends' race and ethnicity differs depending on the context. With regards to stability and conflict, McGill, Way, and Hughes (2012) found that intraracial best friends are associated with higher conflict than interracial best friends, while Rude and Herda (2010) found that interracial friendships are less stable than same-race friendships. In terms of personal identity, having more Black friends in a racially diverse school is associated with identity stability for African American adolescents (Yip, Seaton, Sellers, 2010). McGill, Way and Hughes (2012), however, found that Black and Asian American young people who only have interracial best friends, self-report a lower emotional well-being than their peers with only intraracial best friends. In addition to the importance of context, researchers have also found that the nature of interracial interactions is important, as they can be positive,

negative, highly nuanced, and means for perpetuation of racial stereotypes (Hallinan, Kubitschek & Liu, 2009; Koo & Nishimura, 2013). Little research, however, has examined the importance of interracial and interethnic friendships among young people of color; this gap should be addressed. All students, however, regardless of the nature of their interracial interactions, actively navigate race in school.

Navigating Race and Racism in School. For young people of color, navigating race and racism in school is an everyday occurrence and has real peer effects. Brondolo, Libretti, Rivera and Walsnmann (2012) examined how all the different levels of racism (cultural, institutional and individual) undermine the development of peer relations. They found that cultural racism fostered race-related social distancing, institutional racism inhibited the development of cross race-relations skills, interpersonal racism decreased the quality of exchanges and increased anxiety, and internalized racism weakened the benefits of cross race peer relations.

How young people navigate different levels of racism in their schools varies; some have a distal awareness, others minimize the importance of race and racism, and some have an integrative awareness of race and racism (Arrington, 2002). Those who are race and racism minimalists accept the dominant racial ideology and straddle the mainstream culture of their peers; in turn, they were more likely to have higher GPAs (Carter, 2006).

Personal racial identity, therefore, is important in understanding peer relations and academic achievements. McLaughlin and Jones (2009) explored the variations in the meanings of racial identity in a predominately African American urban high school finding that students embraced "different meanings of African American racial identity and that these meanings were differently related to achievement and engagement" (p. 73). Perhaps, this is because gifted and

middle-class Black, Hispanic, and low-income students are subjected to micro-aggressions based on their exceptional capabilities (Allen, 2013; Stambaugh & Ford, 2015).

Regardless of their level of awareness, however, institutional racism actively affects the peer lives of students of color. Schools are sites of potential racial classification, a process that often perpetuates harmful racial stereotypes associated with "White" or "Black" schools (Ispa-Landa & Conwell, 2015). At a more individual level, racism in schools is also often perpetuated by adults in the community (Chapman, Antrop-González, Allen & Palmer, 2010). In some communities, adults do not perpetuate racism, but do not counteract it either. Froyum (2010), for example, found after-school program role models were reproducing inequalities for low-income Black girls through the transferring of emotional capital. Although they tried to teach the girls to manage their emotions as a way to counteract racism they instead taught the girls emotional deference (Froyum, 2010). This has real consequences, as Zirkel's (2002) research demonstrated that race/gender matched role models are crucially important to the development of student's achievement oriented goals.

Furthermore, the perpetuation of color-blind racism in schools glosses over the nuanced experiences of students of color. In his progressive research, Cammarota (2014) looked at Latino/a students' counter-narratives which challenged colorblindness to identify suitable language and dialogues to use with young Latinos/as. This is especially important as Ochoa and Pineda (2008) found that Latino/as were less likely than their peers to engage in class discussion because they felt inarticulate, wanted to avoid discussions about race or racism, or had previously been taught to self-silence in the classroom. In turn, individuals' racial identity has real effects on their well-being, academic achievements, and friendships.

While the literature on friendship, race, and identity in schools collectively reveals the importance of context and peer effects, it is also reveals many gaps. Perhaps, most prominently, positivist and developmental scholars have primarily informed the friendship literature. While this knowledge is incredibly valuable in its exhibition of behavioral tendencies and academic achievement, it rarely takes into account youth centered methodological and theoretical approaches. Furthermore, with regards to sociology, Eve (2002) argues that friendship occupies a small place in sociological literature and is rarely addressed except for within issues of power and stratification. He claims that this is because contemporary societies assume that friendship is a highly individual matter. In turn, Eve (2002) and Pahl (2002) call for a deeper understanding of the sociology of friends and friendships as exploring the nature of friendship could have profound sociological significance. It is also necessary to understand how young people of color navigate race and racism in a variety of school types and contexts. In turn, it is important to qualitatively understand: *How do young people of color navigate, and make meaning of race and racism in a variety of school types and contexts?* Additionally, it is important that these stories are told by the young people themselves in order to avoid adultist or racist methodological choices.

Differentials in Access to Quality Schooling

Friendship, race and identity are not the only factors that affect young people's social school worlds. This section explores how schools serve as structural worlds in which peer interactions take place and how young people's schools are not all created equal. Explanations for differentials in access to quality schooling, including residential segregation and parental privilege, are provided.

Residential Segregation. In their influential scholarship Massey and Denton (1993), revealed that the residential movements of Blacks and Whites in urban and suburban communities over the past 30 years showed that suburbanization has increased the racial and economic segregation of Blacks in cities and suburbs. Since then, neighborhood change, and neighborhood effects for Whites and Blacks have been examined. Despite decreases in poverty and increases in educational attainment, residential segregation continues to exist and have negative consequences such as decreasing employment odds for Blacks but not Whites (Darden & Kamel, 2000; Swisher, Kuhl & Chavez, 2013; vonLockette, 2010). Neighborhood dynamics, however, often operate outside of the Black-White binary. Specifically, those who identify as Multi-racial/ethnic often occupy an intermediate social position and have less segregation from Whites than did other people of color who identified with a single race (Bennett, 2011; Frey & Meyers, 2002).

Table 1. *Racial and Ethnic Composition of Schools Attended by the Average U.S. Student of Each Race 2011-2012*

Percent Race/Ethnicity in Each School	Racial/Ethnic Composition of School Attended by Average:			
	White Student	Black Student	Asian Student	Latino/a Student
% White	72.5%	27.6%	38.9%	25.1%
% Black	8.3%	48.8%	10.7%	10.9%
% Asian	3.9%	3.6%	24.5%	4.7%
% Latino/a	11.8%	17.1%	22.1%	56.8%
% Other [a]	3.5%	2.9%	3.8%	2.5%

Notes: Adapted from Orfield, Frankenberg, Ee, & Kuscera (2014); Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data, 2011-12; [a] 'Other' represents students who identified as Native American or Multiracial.

Increasingly, however, socioeconomic status (SES) is becoming more important in understanding residential segregation. Iceland and Wilkes (2006), for example, found that SES is what's really important in understanding the segregation of African Americans and Whites. Similarly, Wahl, Breckenridge, and Gunkel (2007) found that in micropolitan areas, Latinos/as become less segregated from non-Hispanic Whites with SES gains. Despite this, however, severe racial and SES segregation still exist and are having real effects on the lived realities of young

people. As Rivkin (1994) notes, U.S. schools, despite school integration efforts, still remain

highly segregated because of the deeply entrenched residential segregation (see Table 1).

School Choice. In order to try and account for severe residential segregation, school

systems have implemented school choice policies aiming to achieve integration. Modern school

choice is defined as "systemic alternatives to public education" (Gross, 2014, p. 509).

Proponents of school choice maintain that it promotes racial balance and enhances academic

excellence as individual schools offer high quality instruction and innovative curriculum to

attract students (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). School choice policy assumes that schools will

compete for students by improving the quality of the educational product, parents will choose the

best schools for their children, and low-income families will have a means to escape low quality

community schools (Beal & Hendry, 2012; Macedo, 2003). Opponents, however have their own

criticisms. Firstly, the deregulation of these schooling assignment policies, means that there is

less predictability and more mobility (Lauen, 2007). Furthermore, it has been argued that school

choice actually inhibits school equity because effective and quality education is not developed or

prioritized for the majority of students (Metz, 1986).

The 'choices' created by districts vary. Some implement inter-district schools which

accept students from multiple neighborhoods. These include charter, magnet, and

technical/vocational schools. Magnet schools, are different, however in that they were originally

created specifically as a method of desegregation by the federal courts in *Morgan v. Kerrigan*

(1975) (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). The idea was that magnet schools would have "educational

offerings so promising that, it was hoped, parents would overcome their fears and concerns about

interracial contact and place their children in desegregated settings (Smrekar & Goldring, 2002;

1999, pp. 15-16). While findings are mixed, Gore (2005) found that magnet schools were

successful in bringing students of different races and ethnicities together because they were able to bond over a similar shared interest that was the focus of the curriculum.

Since their inception in Minnesota in 1991, charter schools, have also served students living in multiple districts (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). They are different from magnet schools, however, in that they are privately run; "underwritten with public funds but run independently, charter schools are free from a range of state laws and district policies stipulating what and how they teach, where they can spend their money, and who they can hire and fire" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). Like magnets, charters create a "market" for schools (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). Again, feedback on charter schools is mixed, and while they are sometimes praised for their excellent education, there are also many negative claims against them as well (Buckley & Schneider, 2007). Testing, long school-days, segregated communities, 'creaming' students, unfair treatment of students, and the problems with privatized education have all been held against the charter school movement (Bracey, 2002; Hill & Lake, 2010; Sahm, 2015; Sarason, 1998). Other intra-district reforms have used bussing and school vouchers as a means to try and achieve integration, but these policies have faced much criticism (Carlson & Cowen, 2015; Green & Cowden, 1992; Weil, 2002).

The Difficult Implementation of School Integration Reforms. One reason that school-integration efforts have proven unsuccessful is because many parents with racial and SES privilege actively maintain and sustain residential segregation, especially when "shopping" for schools (Bankston & Caldas, 1996; Dougherty et al., 2015; Henig, 1995; Lankford & Wyckoff, 2000; Padilla, 2012; Saporito, 2003; Tedin & Weiher, 2004; Weiher & Tedin, 2002). If particular schools represent a potential academic disadvantage, families with privilege will remove their children from these schools as they represent a future academic liability (Bankston & Caldas,

1996). Often, this potential academic disadvantage is almost synonymous with a high percentage

of students of color.

This phenomenon has been represented across disciplines. Chapman, Antrop-González,

Allen and Palmer (2011) found this phenomenon of shopping for schools to be true through their

analysis of school documents from the Milwaukee metropolitan district, arguing that the lack of

court-ordered support for race-based policies allows parents to shop for schools based on race

and class. Similarly, Saporito's (2003) findings showed that families avoided schools with a

higher percentage of non-students and that this could not be accounted for by other school

characteristics such as test scores, safety, or poverty rates. Hook and Snyder (2007) represented

this in their analysis of the decrease of students and the increase of Latino/a students for over a

decade in California schools.

This movement to shop for schools is very clearly represented in the real estate market.

Dougherty and colleagues (2015) found that many suburban families were actively maintaining

racial segregation through home purchasing practices. By analyzing home prices in a particular

suburb for a decade with regard to test scores and the racial make-up of the public neighborhood

schools, they found that while both test scores and race explained home prices, "the influence of

tests declined while race became nearly seven times more influential" over the 10 years (p. 523).

Specifically, they found that at the end of their time scope, homebuyers were willing to pay

$7,468 more to live in a school zone with a lower percentage of students of color (p. 540). As

mentioned in the literature, it is not only families who actively maintain this residential

segregation. Specifically, it has been found that the Black middle class also often maintains

residential segregation, opting to live in predominately Black communities in order to avoid the

high costs of racism (Adelman, 2005; 2004). This has its own costs, however, as racial

residential segregation remains an enduring obstacle to educational equity for middle class

Blacks, as well as poor Blacks (Davis & Welcher, 2013).

Sometimes goals of segregation are implicit, as one parent told Taylor (2015), "I'm not a

racist — it's not that I don't want my children to go to school in a mixed school…but at the same

time we want the best for our children. We want the best for our property value." Not all parents,

however, *actively* try to segregate their children's schools. As the literature shows, many middle

class parents of color use their social capital to try to enroll their children in school choice

programs (Ergin & Sönmez, 2006; Gradstein & Justman, 2005; Mirsa, Grimes & Rogers, 2013;

Ni, 2007). As André-Bechely (2005) notes, however, well-intentioned parents who become

active participants and engage with supposed "equitable and democratic" policies, often actually

reproduce school inequities and inequalities. This is because they transfer their resources and

social capital away from neighborhood schools. Furthermore, in the struggle for status those who

have a higher status, higher income, better education, and more information are more likely to

'win' their child a spot (Lauen, 2007). It has been shown that families who are more

disadvantaged are less likely to exercise school choice, because they are less aware of magnet

programs (Henig, 1995; Lauen, 2007).

Effects of Integrative School Experience on the Individual and Community

Despite these structural challenges, however, states have tried to pursue aggressive

educational policy reforms to create reduced-isolation school environments for students,

regardless of their place of residence. This has had effects on both individuals and communities.

Effects on individuals include increased test scores for students of color; however, this is only

possible if 'integrative' school experiences are actually integrated, which often is not the case

because of racial segregation at the classroom level. Additionally, integrated schools have isolating effects on communities, which are often exacerbated when SES is taken into account.

Integrative School Experience on the Individual. States have pursued educational policy reforms to create reduced-isolation school environments for students, regardless of their place of residence. These reduced-isolation policies can have positive effects on both individuals and communities (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Bifulco, Cobb & Bell, 2009; Weiss & Baker-Smith 2010). Attendance at a reduced-isolation school, and specifically a magnet school, increased test scores for young people of color in the cities of Boston and Philadelphia and the state of Connecticut, (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Bifulco, Cobb, & Bell, 2009; Weiss & Baker-Smity). More generally, racial integration in schools increased student achievement especially for Black students (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002).

One effect of the integrative school experience for individuals, however, is that it is not actually always integrated. Within reduced isolation schools there is social isolation and racial segregation present at a classroom level. Often, there is a greater social isolation of students of color in racially heterogeneous schools (Bush, Burley & Causey-Bush, 2001; DuBois & Hirsch, 1990; Zirkel, 2004). Furthermore, while schools may be integrated at the overall level, classrooms are not due to tracking, extracurricular activities, and dual-language programs which re-segregate students by race and ethnicity (Chapman, Antrop-González, Allen & Palmer, 2010; Moody, 2001; Lewis, 2015; Tyson, 2015). Therefore, schools may be racially and ethnically integrated, social and academic groupings often re-segregates students.

Integrative School Experience on the Community. The literature also indicates that reduced isolation schools can actually have isolating effects on surrounding communities (Archabald, 2004; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006; Wanzer, Moore and Dougherty, 2008). Saporito and

Sohoni (2006), for example, showed that twenty-two of the largest school districts in the U.S. would actually be more racially integrated if all young people attended their district neighborhood schools. Therefore, attendance at school-choice programs actually perpetuates racial isolation and segregation in local neighborhood schools, leaving these young people with even less opportunities, resources and choices.

Wanzer, Moore and Dougherty (2008) revealed that school quality and geographical convenience was not the primary factor driving families' decision to enroll their children in choice programs. Instead, the racial composition of the neighborhood was the driving factor; in almost half of the districts, "students who were the racial minority were more likely to apply to a magnet school as a means of exiting their neighborhood school," making their neighborhood schools more racially isolated (p. 16). It is important to acknowledge that the creation of reduced isolation schools or programs has the potential to directly affect community life and community ties, as participants often have deep connections to racially segregated schools (Mongo, 2013).

The Effect of SES on Schools and Communities. Similarly, as Archabald (2004) notes, magnet schools can have stratifying effects on surrounding communities. He notes that magnet-based school-choice programs have raised concerns over their potential to create or worsen between-school economic segregation by income, due to class related inequalities among parents in access to information, academic support, capabilities, transportation, political influence and other factors. Additionally, Archabald (2004) states that:

> [Choice] will also drain these schools of a precious human resource, the highest motivated and achieving students with the most involved parents. The concentration and proportion of the most at-risk children will be increased in the poorest schools, which will have even fewer resources to work with (p. 287).

It has been suggested that by removing high quality students from a school will then adversely affect their low ability peers who remain in community schools (Dills, 2005).

The concentration of poverty in schools is very important with concerns to student achievement. As Rumberger and Palardy (2005) found that socioeconomic segregation of schools had a greater impact on student's achievement growth than the net of other background factors. This background of knowledge on the history and concomitant of school choice, however, is lacking in that young people's daily lives and interpersonal relationships are overlooked, and their voices are never heard. Therefore, it is important to ask: *How do young people experience living in a metropolitan area with a school choice program that is based on increasing racial and ethnic integration?* In order to answer these research questions and address the gaps in the literature, I employ two critical theories and methodologies.

Analytical Framework

As evidenced by the school-choice and friendship literature, the voices of young people of color are not being heard and are rarely the topic of study. In order to account for this absence, this paper engages critical race theory and critical childhood studies. Prioritized in the methodology and analysis is the tenet of counter-storytelling. Counter-storytelling is central to both theories, and is used to expose, analyze, and challenge master narratives and the majoritarian discourse. Master narratives are used to maintain and perpetuate racism and adultism, which "essentialize and wipe out the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life" (Montecinos, 1995, p. 293). In turn, it is crucial to focus on the intersections of oppression in storytelling because people's experiences are affected by racism, sexism, classism, ageism, adultism, abelism and heteronormativity and stories from the margins of society are often not heard (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical Race Theory

Race is a powerful social construct that "responds to no biological or genetic realities" and intersects with other aspects of identity, such as socio-economic status, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and language to create lived realities (Crenshaw, 1995, Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p. 8 Parker, 2015; Parker & Lynn, 2002). The concept of race and its meaning has continually evolved due to historical, social, political, and economic contexts and has been used as a tool for the justification of racism, which is a permanent fixture in American life (Bell, 1992a; Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Parker, 2015; Winant, 2004). Racism involves the phenomenon in which one group deems itself superior to all others; that group has the power to carry out racist behavior, and racism then benefits the "superior" group while negatively affecting other racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). It is not an individual pathology, but a pervasive, collective, systemic, institutionalized structural phenomenon that is permanent, adaptable, and that must be challenged (Bell, 1992a; Bernal, 2002; Landson-Billings, & Tate, 1995).Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a collection of knowledge informed by activists and scholars that aims to challenge these notions. It studies race, racism, and power, and transforming the relations between these aspects (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012; Landson-Billings, 2009; Taylor, 2009).

Critical Race Theory and Education. In education research, Milner (2007) notes that people of color have historically been "misrepresented, exploited, silenced, and taken for granted" and that many education researchers "have given privileged status to dominant, voices, beliefs, ideologies and views over the voices of people of color" (pp. 388-9). Additionally, while students of color are "holders and creators of knowledge," their histories, experiences, and languages are minimized in formal educational settings by either being "devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted" (Bernal, 2002, p. 106).

While racial and ethnic inequity may not be a planned goal of educational theory, policy, or practices, it is very frequently an outcome (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Bernal, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; McGee & Martin, 2011; Parker, 2015; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). Colorblindness, interest-convergence, and privilege are used to sustain a racially hostile environment for students of color in majority White schools through the use of tracking, traditional curriculum, teacher practices, and student surveillance (Chapman, 2013). Additionally, the perception and promotion of policy has also been informed by racism, as school desegregation policies have been promoted only in ways that advantage Whites (Bell, 1992b; Landson-Billings, 2009). In turn, educational theory, policy, and practices are often acts of White supremacy (Gillborn, 2009). Within education, critical race scholarship has contributed to the growing body of qualitative research and has demonstrated the embedded structural and social realities of racism within schools and education policy (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995; Fernandez, 2002; Parker, 2015; Vaught, 2008).

For purposes of this paper, I respond to Tate's (1999) call to engage "a theory of education that might help to change educational inequities for students of color" (p. 255), by adopting Solórzano and Yosso (2002) definition of critical race methodology in educational research as a grounded approach that:

> (a) Foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research process…also challenges the separate discourses on race, gender, and class by showing how these three elements intersect to affect the experiences of students of color; (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color; (c) offers a liberatory or transformative solution to racial, gender, and class subordination; and (d) focuses on the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of students of color (p. 24).

This critical race methodology in educational research offers a way to understand the experiences and lived realities of young people of color in the education system. I aim to use

critical race theory as a framework to tell the stories of those who have been "epistemologically marginalized, silenced, and disempowered" (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36). Furthermore, I strive to engage racial and cultural awareness, consciousness, and acknowledge my own positionality.[4]

Critical Childhood Studies

Childhood, like race, is a social construction as it varies cross-culturally (James & Prout, 2015). Childhood, can never be entirely separated from other variables which contribute to identity, including class, gender, or ethnicity (James & Prout, 2015). Conceptually we should separate young people from the adults in their lives and *then* include young people in their own right (Mayall, 2000; James, 2010; James & Prout, 2015). This approach, however, has not always been practiced, or taken into account. They are often viewed as passive beings, or *becommings*, incapable and unworthy of agency or choice (Davis, 2006; Mayall, 2000). For example, a forefather of sociology, Émile Durkheim (1972), stated: "education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life" (p. 204). Theories and policies concerning the needs of children and young people have almost entirely and exclusively derived from adult perspectives; most often by those occupying privileged social positions (Mayall, 2000, 2006).

Critical childhood studies highlights young people's agency, and uses qualitative methodology in order to tell their counter-stories. It holds that young people have the capacity and will to act independently and freely from families and peer groups (Davis, 2006; James & Prout, 1990; Waksler, 1991). As Mayall (2000) states, "they are moral agents, who carry out important activities, both in the structuring and progressing of their own lives within relationships, and in making and remaking relationships within the family and with friends" (p.

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[4] See Index for more reflection on my own positionality.

255). This process is known as *interpretive reproduction*, in which children are not only

internalizing social structure, but actively, innovatively, and creatively contributing to the

production of society and culture while moving within the existing constraints of these structures

(Ahn, 2011; Cosaro, 2014; James, 2010; Mayall, 2002).

Young people "collectively produce their own peer worlds and cultures" by taking

elements from adult culture that are appropriate, and interpreting them into their own cultural

forms (Adler & Adler 1998; Cosaro, 2014, p. 23; Pascoe, 2011; Thorne, 1993). Cosaro (2014)

defines peer cultures as a "stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values and concerns that

children produce and share in interaction with peers" (p. 19). Peer cultures are different and

complex, and can only be understood in context (Pini, 2004; Thorne, 1993).

Critical childhood studies emphasizes the importance of understanding, hearing, and

appreciating the lived realities of young people. It acknowledges the inequality in power between

adults and young people, and challenges the emphasis on protection and children's passivity in

the adultist construction of childhood. It affirms that childhood is a construction, temporality,

and a structural form in society that varies across culture and history (Cosaro, 2014; Qvortrup,

2010). By engaging the knowledge generated by critical childhood studies in both methodology

and analysis, I aim to focus on and emphasize the voices and complexities in the lived realities of

young people. I strive to minimize adultism in all aspects of the research process.

Methods

This study uses qualitative methodologies to engage the research questions and provide a

platform for young people's voices to be heard. Participating young people were interviewed

during the summer of 2015 as part of a larger study (PI: Ana Campos-Holland).[5] Previously, in

the summer of 2013, the research team conducted youth-centered and participant-driven semi-

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[5] Ana Campos-Holland, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Connecticut College.

structured interviews to study peer relations with 83 young people (10-17 years old) (Campos-

Holland, Dinsmore, and Kelekay, 2016). As part of these participant-driven interviews, young

people gave the adult researchers a virtual tour of their homes, schools, and communities on

Google Maps, discussing the impact of the racialized educational context on their lived

experiences (Campos-Holland et al., 2016; Campos-Holland, Hall, & Pol, forthcoming). This is

when the research team was introduced to the racial and ethnic integration reform. In 2015 we

returned to the research site to continue to explore the topics young people had previously raised.

In 2015, 74 teens (13-18 years old) were interviewed specifically about their friendships in

different school communities. Most of these teens of color had families who were working class

or middle class.[6] They all lived in a metropolitan area in the North East region of the United

States. A subsample of 20 teens (10 girls, 10 boys) was selected based on age (15-18) and the

school types young people had attended, including traditional community, open-choice, magnet,

charter, technical, and private schools.[7]

Research Site

Data collection in both 2013 and 2015 occurred at four youth centers[8] in a metropolitan

area, which I will refer to as "Greenville Cities" in "Green state."[9] The metropolitan area consists

of 'Downtown Greenville,' 'East Greenville,' 'West Greenville,' and surrounding suburbs. This

metropolitan area and the surrounding suburbs are categorized by extreme residential, SES, and

educational segregation (see Table 2). The four research sites, as well as most of the participants'

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[6] Participants were asked about their parents or legal guardians' occupation. These were then compared with mean earnings for each profession by using the U.S. Censuses' 2014 American Community Survey. Family income depended on the number of income earning adults, as well as the professions. Parental occupations included blue-collar jobs like truck drivers and mechanics, and white collar jobs like nurses and car salesmen/woman.

[7] For purposes of this paper, we use 'community school' to refer to traditional public schools which only serve families who live in their district. This is to avoid confusion as magnet, charter, and open-choice schools are also public, and therefore run by the state.

[8] All four of the youth centers where interviews took place offered both summer and school year programming.

[9] For participants' and the youth centers' confidentiality, 'Greenville Cities' is used as a pseudonym for the metropolitan area where young people lived.

homes are located in Downtown Greenville, two participants, however, reside in 'Suburb 7' (see

Table 3). Additionally, 8 of the 20 participants attended school in one of the surrounding suburbs

(see Table 3 for more specificity).

Table 2. *Greenville Cities' socio-educational characteristics*

	U.S.	Green State[a]	East Greenville[a]	Downtown Greenville[a]	West Greenville[a]	Greenville Suburbs[u]
Racial/Ethnic Population	314,107,084	--[a]	51,211	125,211	63,396	31,358
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.1%	0.5%	0.4%	0.9%	0.1%	0.1%
Asian	4.9%	4.0%	5.7%	2.5%	6.6%	4.8%
Black/African American	12.2%	9.5%	24.2%	35.1%	6.8%	14.5%
Latino/a	16.9%	14.3%	29.1%	43.6%	9.9%	9.7%
Multiracial/ethnic	2.1%	1.9%	2.3%	2%	2.2%	2.1%
White	62.8%	69.8%	38.3%	15.9%	74.4%	68.7%
Educational Attainment Population[e]	209,056,129	2,455,577	35,505	73,543	44,400	21,761
less than high school graduate	13.6%	10.4%	16.1%	29.7%	6.6%	9.2%
high school graduate[i]	28.0%	27.6%	33.8%	30.8%	17.1%	27.9%
some college or associate's degree	29.1%	24.9%	31.2%	24.5%	17.5%	26.1%
bachelor's degree	18.3%	20.6%	12.4%	8.6%	27.4%	20.6%
graduate or professional degree	11%	16.4%	6.50%	6.4%	31.60%	16.2%
Median Earnings Population[o]	$36,034	$44,948	$36,252	$27,171	$54,816	$49,561
less than high school graduate	$19,954	$22,479	$21,461	$17,996	$35,294	$25,983
high school graduate[i]	$27,868	$33,651	$34,167	$25,602	$27,256	$38,065
some college or associate's degree	$33,988	$40,246	$35,761	$27,787	$40,748	$41,562
bachelor's degree	$50,515	$60,327	$50,502	$43,767	$57,295	$59,768
graduate or professional degree	$66,944	$77,808	$60,327	$57,574	$82,020	$102,202
Enrolled K-12[y]	54,099,734	614,998	8,019	25,245	10,757	5,312
Public school	90.0%	90.3%	93.4%	95.6%	91.3%	90.9%
Private school	10.0%	9.7%	6.6%	4.4%	8.7%	9.1%
Enrolled in college[y]	19,604,434	217,862	2,641	12,190	3,485	1982
Public school	78.3%	66.8%	73.8%	50.4%	59.0%	71.2%
Private school	21.7%	33.2%	26.2%	49.6%	41.0%	28.8%

Notes: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates, *American Fact Finder,* retrieved February 5th, 2016 from http://factfinder.census.gov/; [a] to maintain confidentiality 'Green' is used when referring to the metropolitan area where research was conducted, additionally the state population has been omitted; [e] for the population 25 and over; [i] includes equivalency; [o] earnings in the 2014 adjusted for inflation, for the population who is 25 and over with earnings; [u] participants also resided or attended school in 8 of Greenville Cities surrounding suburbs (see table 3 for details), these figures are averages of the 8 suburbs; [y] 2014 estimates.

Many of the suburbs, as well as West Greenville, have populations that are primarily

White/Caucasian, with high levels of educational attainment, high earnings, and a high

percentage of K-12 students enrolled in private schools. Downtown Greenville is predominantly

a Black/African American and Latino/a city, with drastically lower levels of educational

attainment and median earnings. Furthermore, in Downtown Greenville only 4.4% of K-12

students are enrolled in private schools, which is fewer than in West Greenville, Green State or

the U.S. Additionally, it should be noted that Suburb 2 is a predominately Black/African

American community, and Suburb 6 has a large Latino/a population. East Greenville is perhaps

the most diverse city, with a more racially/ethnically balanced population; its earnings, however,

are still below that of Green State and the U.S. While the surrounding suburbs are varied, many

of them most closely resemble West Greenville (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Greenville Cities' Suburbs socio-educational characteristics*

	Suburb1	Suburb2	Suburb3	Suburb4	Suburb5	Suburb6	Suburb7	Suburb8
Racial/Ethnic Population	18,298	20,626	44,713	34,661	73,095	17,791	29,130	12,554
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%
Asian	8.3%	1.9%	2.5%	9.4%	3.0%	1.9%	3.8%	7.3%
Black/African American	0.4%	54.6%	5.5%	2.3%	9.8%	2.3%	36.9%	4.4%
Latino/a	2.6%	5.2%	8.4%	3.9%	38.1%	7.3%	8.1%	4.4%
Multiracial/ethnic	1.2%	4.1%	1.7%	1.1%	2.0%	1.3%	2.9%	2.4%
White/Caucasian	87.5%	34.1%	81.7%	83.2%	46.5%	87.2%	48.0%	81.6%
Educational Attainment Population	12,850	15,831	32,339	23,806	46,634	12,854	20,453	9,321
less than high school graduate	2.5%	8.7%	11.3%	3.9%	20.6%	10.4%	7.7%	8.7%
high school graduate	11.2%	28.8%	37.5%	14.8%	37.1%	33.7%	24.8%	35.1%
some college or associate's degree	17.6%	26.3%	27.9%	20.1%	23.9%	31.4%	29.6%	32.1%
bachelor's degree	36.9%	20.9%	14.8%	28.9%	10.9%	16.6%	20.5%	15.1%
graduate or professional degree	31.7%	15.2%	8.4%	32.3%	7.5%	8.0%	17.4%	9.0%
Median Earnings Population	$72,126	$44,063	$42,249	$67,163	$32,631	$43,058	$47,704	$47,495
less than high school graduate	$31,484	$30,270	$16,210	$22,210	$22,397	$19,135	$32,661	$33,500
high school graduate	$40,544	$34,101	$37,054	$41,875	$30,067	$38,333	$41,190	$41,355
some college or associate's degree	$37,361	$39,649	$42,255	$45,374	$32,253	$43,345	$41,818	$50,439
bachelor's degree	$74,764	$60,750	$56,926	$69,887	$43,934	$46,192	$65,458	$60,236
graduate or professional degree	$121,518	$81,818	$64,917	$93,894	$61,369	$60,057	$69,483	$60,156
Enrolled in K-12	4,566	2,473	6,511	7,067	12,354	2,839	5,028	1,659
Public school	87.5%	79.7%	91.8%	94.9%	95.2%	96.4%	88.3%	93.0%
Private school	12.5%	20.3%	8.2%	5.1%	4.8%	3.6%	11.7%	7.0%
Enrolled in college	660	1,352	2,166	1,441	6,552	947	2,129	607
Public school	48.6%	76.0%	77.3%	67.3%	80.8%	77.5%	65.9%	76.3%
Private school	51.4%	24.0%	22.7%	32.7%	19.2%	22.5%	34.1%	23.7%

Notes: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates, *American Fact Finder,* retrieved February 5th, 2016 from http://factfinder.census.gov/; [e] for the population 25 and over; [i] includes equivalency; [o] earnings in the 2014 adjusted for inflation, for the population who is 25 and over with earnings; [y] 2014 estimates.

Participants experienced drastic racial and socio-economic segregation in their residential

communities, as most of them resided in Downtown Greenville, and two resided in Suburb 7.

This segregation certainly contributed to their educational experiences as well as the level of

educational attainment in the 25-years-and-over population in their home and school cities. To

contextualize, 29.7% of Downtown Greenville, 16.1% of East Greenville, 6.6% of West

Greenville, and an average 9.2% of the surrounding Suburbs have less than a high school

diploma (see Table 3 for more specificity). In addition to residential segregation impacting

Greenville Cities' young people, a shifting educational policy terrain has certainly shaped young

people educational experiences.

Figure 1. *Public School Types across Geographies*
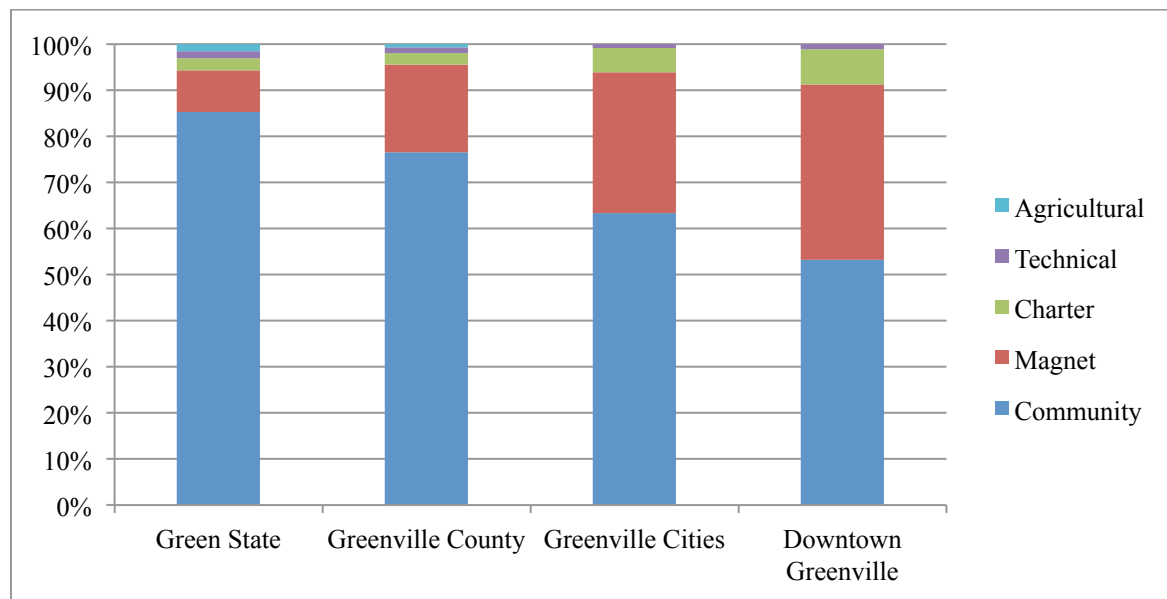
Notes: Number of operating public elementary and secondary schools, by school type. *Green State Education Directory.*
Retrieved June 7th, 2015. The exact source of this data is not provided, as to maintain the participant's confidentiality.

Policy Context

        Throughout the 1990s, Green State experienced a decade-long legal battle for educational

justice, resulting in a mandate that Greenville Cities must correct racial/ethnic inequalities in

education.[10] This ruling led to the implementation of a racial and ethnic integration reform which

included the creation of ever more inter-district magnet, charter, and technical schools which

require that the student population consists of 50% in-town and 50% out-of-town students; as

well as the creation of intra-district open-choice and agricultural programs, housed in well-

resourced schools in the predominately white suburbs. (See Figure 1; Campos-Holland et al.,

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[10] To protect the confidentiality of participating young people and the youth centers, I will not provide the citation for this major
legal case.

This differential educational access was discussed by young people interviewed in 2013, and thus inspired our return to the research site in 2015 (Campos-Holland et al., 2016).

Recruitment and Data Collection

After we acquired access to the research site and approval from the IRB, we invited all eligible teens (13-17) enrolled in summer programming at the youth centers to participate in this study.[11] The research team also used snowball sampling, and eligible teens who had participated in 2013 were contacted, as well as eligible teens who attended the youth centers during the year but were not enrolled in the summer program. Participants and parents of younger children who were enrolled in the summer program were asked if they knew any young people who would be eligible and interested. These teens were invited to participate as well. All interested participants took an informed-consent form home to their legal guardians. The form detailed the study's purpose, risks, and voluntary nature. In addition to parental consent, we also acquired teen assent. All participants then received a $15 gift card to a store of their choice as a token of our gratitude. Before the interview, we reminded participants of the study's strict confidentiality and that they could skip any questions. The data collection team spent many hours in the field participating in activities and "hanging out" with participants in order to build rapport. The team consisted of a 34-year-old Mexicana/Chicana (PI), a 21-year-old White/Caucasian woman (author), a 20-year-old Peruvian-American cisgender man, a 19-year-old Asian-American woman, and a 19-year-old White/Caucasian woman. Therefore, interactions and responses to questions were influenced by the interviewers' and participants' positionalities with concern to race/ethnicity, age, gender, socio-economic class, and home geographies.[12]

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[11] The sample includes one 18 year old.
[12] See Index for specifics on the author's background and credentials, as well as notes on her positionality.

The 2015 data collection process involved semi-structured interviews with closed and open-ended questions about the teens' homes, neighborhoods, community places, schools, friends, and their opinions on state testing and different types of schools. The open and close-ended questions were interwoven and conducted in the same sitting. When possible, a participant-driven online tour was conducted in which participants' used Google Maps to show the interviewer the places that they were describing (Campos-Holland et al., 2016). Regardless whether an online tour was conducted, the interviewer recorded the address of the places described by the participant in either an Excel sheet or on paper. This included participants' home and school addresses as well as other places in the community that were important to them, such as places of worship, youth centers, and gymnasiums. Each interview took approximately 1-3 hours and was primarily conducted in a private room at one of the youth centers.[13] Space availability at one of the youth centers proved to be very difficult, which led the team to focus data-collection on the three other youth centers. Furthermore, due to space restrictions many interviews/surveys took place in a space without Internet access, thus restricting the number of online tours that could be completed.

Sample

Within the population of 74 young people, attendance at different kinds of schools was varied. Participants relayed that they had at one point attended a community school, a magnet school, a charter school, a technical school, an agricultural school, or an open-choice suburban community school. As evidenced by Figure 1, the majority of the schools in Green State are traditional community schools, while in Downtown Greenville nearly half of the schools are choice schools.

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[13] As space was limited at the youth centers, and the young people we interviewed had very busy lives, sometimes interviews were conducted in a public space (such as a library or a restaurant) or a room in the participant's home. While these areas did not always have visual privacy, they always had audible privacy.

Our sample included many motivated, dedicated, and high-achieving teens with involved parents. Specifically, the majority of the participating young people interviewed spent their summer at the youth centers where they often were holding leadership positions. It is possible that these young people had involved parents since in order to attend a choice school, parents must enter their children into a lottery system, which requires knowledge of the application process, time, and dedication (Ergin & Sönmez, 2006; Gradstein & Justman, 2005; Mirsa, Grimes & Rogers, 2013; Ni, 2007). It is also possible, however, that due to the large number of choice schools in Downtown Greenville this was just a more common academic trajectory for young people in Greenville Cities (see Figure 1).

Table 4. *Sub-Sample's Socio-Demographic Characteristics and School Location*

		Black/African American	Jamaican American [e]		Latino/a [a]			Multiracial/ethnic [i]			White	
		15 years old	*16 years old*	*17 years old*	*15 years old*	*16 years old*	*17 years old*	*15 years old*	*17 years old*	*18 years old*	*17 years old*	*Subtotal*
	Downtown Greenville											
	girls	--	--	--	1	1	--	1	1	--	1	5
	boys	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
	East Greenville											
	girls	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
	boys	1	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	1	--	4
	West Greenville											
	boys	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1
	Suburbs											
	girls	--	1	1	--	--	2	--	--	--	--	4
	boys	2	--	--	1	--	--	1	--	--	--	4
	Subtotal	4	1	2	2	2	2	4	1	1	1	20

(School's Location)

Notes: [a] 'Latino/a' included young people who self-identified as Latino/a, Latino/a and Puerto Rican, or Puerto Rican; [e] 'Jamaican American' included young people who self-identified as Jamaican or black/Jamaican; [i] 'Multi-racial/ethnic' included young people who self-identified with some combination of African American, black, Jamaican, Latino/a, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and White/Caucasian

Of these 74 teens, 20 were selected as part of a subsample for this study (see Table 4). The subsample was restricted to young people who had attended at least 1 year of high school.

This decision prioritized hearing voices from teens with a varied school experience who most likely had attended more than one school type. Eligible teens, aged 15-18 (n=42), were then selected based on the types of schools they had attended, so that many school types (magnet, private, technical, agricultural, and community) were represented. Finally, the sample was narrowed again by gender, so as to have a 50/50 split of boys and girls.[14]

The final subsample consists of 10 girls, 10 boys (15-18 years of age) who attended 18 inter-district (magnet, technical, and agricultural) and intra-district community schools during the 2014-2015 academic year (see Table 6 in index for individual school characteristics). Among the 20 young people, 4 self-identified as black/African American, 3 as Jamaican American, 6 as Latino/a, 6 as Multiracial/ethnic, and 1 as White/Caucasian (see Table 4).[15] Additionally, 6 attended school in Downtown Greenville, 5 in East Greenville, 1 in West Greenville, and 8 in one of the surrounding suburbs. Among 20 participants, 10 attended magnet schools, 8 community schools (including open-choice), 1 technical, and 1 agricultural.[16]

Participants' schools in Downtown Greenville had primarily black/African-American and Latino/a populations with the majority of students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch regardless of type (see Table 5). Stark residential racial segregation and socio-economic inequality is evident when comparing Downtown Greenville to schools in other cities, specifically in the White/Caucasian suburban community schools and agricultural schools.[17]

Table 5. *Averaged Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Subsample's Schools*

	Downtown Greenville	East Greenville	West Greenville	Greenville Suburbs
Location				

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[14] During data collection participants were asked if they self-identified as 'girl', 'boy', 'trans*' or other. All 74 participants self-identified as either a 'girl' or 'boy'.

[15] Participants were also asked to self-identify their race/ethnicity. Multi-racial/ethnic, self-identified with two or more races/ethnicities. More detail is provided in the Table 3 notes.

[16] Table 6 in the index specifies each participant's school type, geographical location, and socio-educational demographics; Table 7 in the index explicitly states each participant's residential location.

[17] For a more detailed breakdown of socio-demographic characteristics at each participant's school, see Table 6 in the Index.

School Type	Community	Magnet	Technical	Magnet	Community	Community	Magnet	Agricultural [a]
Enrollment	431	492	801	295	1,502	861	496	2,140
Race/Ethnicity								
Asian	1.8%	4.2%	0.7%	7.0%	11.9%	5.3%	4.7%	9.7%
Black/African American	50.7%	21.3%	31.3%	31.5%	10.9%	17.5%	37.0%	3.8%
Latino/a	41.1%	41.8%	57.4%	27.8%	18.2%	9.6%	29.1%	7.2%
Multiracial/ethnic	4.2%	3.1%	1.5%	4.5%	2.1%	2.6%	3.0%	2.4%
White	2.1%	24.1%	8.9%	28.8%	56.9%	64.7%	25.4%	76.7%
Other	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.1%	0.3%	0.9%	0.2%
Gender	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Male	42.4%	50.8%	46.7%	40.0%	50.7%	52.0%	44.1%	47.7%
Female	57.6%	49.2%	53.3%	60.0%	49.3%	48.0%	55.9%	52.3%
Eligible for free/reduced lunch	453	344	585	110	385	196	244	202
Free lunch	90.3%	66.1%	65.0%	25.7%	19.8%	17.4%	41.7%	7.0%
Reduced-price	16.2%	6.5%	8.0%	10.5%	5.8%	6.6%	11.8%	2.4%

Notes: Public school data 2013-2014, 2014-2015 school years, *Common Core of Data*, retrieved February 5th 2016, from received from https://nces.ed.gov/ccd on February 8th 2016; [a] these figures are representative of the suburban community school that hosts this agricultural program as data on the individual program was not available.

Data Preparation and Analysis

The 20 interviews were prepared for analysis through a transcription process with two transcribers, which guaranteed reliability and accuracy. The first transcriber focused on accurately recording the interviewer's and the participant's words, tones, and non-verbal emotional displays. The second transcriber then read the transcript for accuracy, and made edits when appropriate. To ensure accuracy, both transcribers referred to the Excel sheets made during data collection, which consisted of participants' past and current schools, homes, and community places. Using the qualitative coding software, Atlas.ti.4, the sections of the interviews concerning friendship and school experience were generally coded. Using a grounded approach, emic and inductive coding was used to allow themes to arise from the data. Themes were then analyzed; patterns and connections are discussed in the findings. While the transcription process involved at least two transcribers, this was not the case for the coding process. It should also be acknowledged that the author was the only one to code the data; therefore, it is impossible to claim that analysis was unbiased.

As previously mentioned, sample selection prioritized differences in school types and school experience. Due to this sizeable variation, no comparative analysis was performed. This is also true with regards to a comparison analysis with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, or geographical locations of homes or schools. While in the findings individual's socio-educational demographics are often introduced, this is only for contextual purposes. For a more detailed explanation of her socio-educational history and positionality, see Index.

Results

These twenty young people explained their experiences with friendships and peer cultures in the racial and ethnic integration reform in Greenville Cities. In this section young people discuss the policy context shaping their friendships. Furthermore how they conceptualize, demonstrate, and maintain friendships is shared. Finally, how these young people navigate differences in race, ethnicity and SES, and make meaning of their experiences through the Good Kid/ Bad Kid binary is explained.

Shifting Friendships in Racial and Ethnic School Integration Reforms

As previously discussed, the young people in Greenville Cities are currently experiencing a school system undergoing a racial and ethnic integration reform. In this shifting policy terrain, adult stakeholders have set forth new solutions. These include the creation of inter-district schools (magnet, charter, and technical) as well as the opening of intra-district open-choice programs, including agricultural centers housed in suburban community schools. All of these initiatives aim to increase racial and ethnic integration, and provide families with a choice other than their local community schools. As discussed in this section, adults' choices often had consequences on youth's peer cultures and friendships.

Adult Authority: Hoping for Quality, Promoting Mobility. Stark educational inequality is still evident in Greenville Cities, despite the integration reform. Young people are very much aware of this inequality and know which schools are academically privileged communities and which are not. It is most often their parental figures, however, who determine which school they attend, and thus what kind of resources they have access to. Many parents are proactive in trying to ensure a high quality of education for their children. One way in which they do this is by entering them into a lottery system for magnet, technical, charter, and open-choice suburban schools, or by means of some other application processes, such as those used for private schools. One consequence of this parental choice is that young people are often moving between schools in search of a higher quality of education. This heightened mobility is affecting young people's friendships and peer cultures, often placing them in a state of transition.

(Ine)quality of Education. It is clear to the young people of Greenville Cities that there is inequality between schools, and that certain schools are more privileged academic communities. Young people who live in Downtown Greenville recognize that their community schools are struggling, and are not being prioritized. For example, Happy, a 17-year-old White/Caucasian girl who most recently attended a magnet school in Downtown Greenville, stated that: "I think people feel like the education for the students that go [to a Downtown Greenville community high school] aren't really a priority…its just not really that important to people who are in charge."[18] Happy noted that community schools are unappealing options for teens who live in Greenville Cities: "I know that a lot of students go [to Downtown Greenville community high schools] 'cuz that's the only option they have." In addition these young people acknowledge the

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[18] When participants are introduced for their first time, their self-selected pseudonym and socio-educational demographics (age, race/ethnicity, school type, school location) will be included. Thereafter, only their pseudonyms will be used. A full table of individual participant's socio-educational characteristics are available in Table 5 in the index.

inequalities their neighborhood communities face and they are also aware of the schools that are being prioritized.

Young people in Greenville Cities consider magnet schools to have the best quality of education. Basketball, a 15-year-old African-American boy who most recently attended a magnet school in Suburb 5, said: "You can actually get somewhere in life with those schools. I'm not saying that you don't get anywhere in life with public schools, but in magnet schools... I [had] better representation…we have a way better chance [of getting into college]." While aware of the benefits of attending these privileged academic communities, Jerimih, an 18-year-old Multi-racial/multi-ethnic boy who attended a magnet school in East Greenville noted, that they are flawed. He explained: "These magnet schools, charter schools, they create segregation as well. Maybe not racially, but just intellectually." This, however, was not the only inequality witnessed.

In addition to this inequality, participants also addressed the unequal distribution of resources and increased political representation at predominantly White community schools in the suburbs. Jerimih explained his view: "I think predominantly White high schools just have better resources and a better education system…A minority student, an inner-city student going to a predominantly White high school, which is better funded…even if they did mediocrely [sic], they'd be better off." In addition to having better resources, Ezekiel, a 15-year-old African-American boy who most recently attended a magnet school in Downtown Greenville, also noted that these schools have a better quality of education due to the race and ethnicity of the student body, and therefore have increased political representation: "Since it's in a suburban area, they take it more seriously...than the inner city kids, which is mostly like African-American and Spanish [Latino/as]…I think it's 'cuz there's more Caucasians in suburban areas." In order to try

and make these opportunities available to all students, like Ezekiel stressed, the state established a racial and ethnic integration reform.

  The Adult Dominated Lottery Experience. In order to determine who has access to the public inter-district and intra-district schools, the state employs an optional lottery system that families can choose to enter their child into. Many of the participants in this sample often academically benefited from this system, as they were placed in privileged academic communities. As Spiderman, a 15-year-old Latino boy who most recently attended a magnet school in Suburb 3, explained: "I coulda went to a school that had one of the baddest reputations." Due to the lottery, however, Spiderman most recently attended a magnet school in Suburb 2. Smith, a 15-year-old African-American boy who most recently attended a magnet school in East Greenville, explained that compared to his friends he benefited the most from the lottery system: "We all just went into the lottery and if you won, then you go to that school. And if you didn't then you go to your district school or the charter school. I was the lucky one." There are other factors at play, however, and the process is not determined only by the luck of the draw.

  This is especially true at magnet schools, which are required to maintain a 50/50 in-town to out-of-town ratio. Magnet schools were created with the primary concern of increasing racial and ethnic integration (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999). In turn, factors such as race and ethnicity, as well as socio-economic status are important to a student's eligibility. Happy, the only White/Caucasian participant in this sample explained how the combination of her race and ethnicity, and her residential location increased her chances of receiving a spot at a coveted magnet school. She said: "When I was like looking into this school, the principal told my parents that if I applied I would most likely get in because I'm White and I'm from [Downtown

Greenville]. So I think they try to balance it." This, however, was the not the circumstance for

Ralph, a 15-year-old Multi-racial/ethnic boy who most recently attended a community school in

Downtown Greenville.

Ralph most recently attended a community high school in Downtown Greenville that is

stigmatized by his peers as being a 'bad' school with 'bad' kids. He wants to go to a magnet

school in Downtown Greenville that has educated many star athletes in the past. Currently, Ralph

is on the waiting list and explained his feelings regarding the system and situation: "It sucks…I

feel like some of those kids are taking up space because, there be kids that actually want to go to

that school for a specific reason…to get themselves better… be more successful. Some other

kids just get lucky." These other kids, however, got "lucky" with the help of the adults in their

lives.

The decision to engage in the lottery process is primarily dominated by adults including

parents, other adult family members, and teachers. Only one participant, Smith, explained that he

chose where he went to school: "It was really my decision. [My parents] were glad that I picked

that." For Happy, it was a combination of adults. She explained: "My mom's friend was a

teacher here… they moved on to the street…that's how she found out about this school I think.

And then, I ended up going here." Like Happy, Doritos, a 16-year-old Latino boy who most

recently attended a community school in West Greenville, explained that he was not in control

when choosing where he wanted to go to high school: "My mom thought [West Greenville

community high school] was a rowdy place [with] kids who fought all the time… all she could

think of was private school, so she started looking into it...I didn't want to go there at all."

Similarly, Sweetheart, a 17-year-old Latina girl who most recently attended a community school

in Suburb 6, said that it was her mother who decided that she should go to a suburban school:

"She's like, 'It has a better education. You'll learn better. You'll actually want to do something with your life. You won't have to live with me forever.'" While Sweetheart was at first upset to leave, she later explained that she was happy with her mother's decision and ended up making a lot of friends. Echoed in both Doritos and Sweetheart's stories is a sentiment that their parents made these decisions in order to secure for their children a higher quality of education. Devon, a 15-year-old Multi-racial/multi-ethnic boy who most recently attended a magnet school in Suburb 4, offered his own opinion. He explained: "Say I'm like a parent, right? And I want my kid to go to a public school…I just like send him there 'cuz I don't really care that much." He argues, "Versus a parent who makes a decision to like send their kid to a magnet school because they actually care where they go and because they know like that'll be helpful." Therefore, while the lottery predominantly affected the young people, adults primarily made the decisions. As demonstrated by Devon, young people held the adults in their life accountable to secure a high quality education. For some young people this decision resulted in increased school mobility.

   School Mobility. Among this subsample, there were varied levels of school mobility (see Table 8 for a detailed explanation of participants' educational histories). While this variation could be due to many reasons, including socio-economic status, residential mobility, and family choices, it is also reasonable to conclude that the racial and ethnic integration reform has for some also led to increased school mobility. As outlined, the young people in Greenville Cities are in a system with institutional inequalities; in turn, many try to use the lottery system to their advantage, as a way to access a more privileged academic community. They are constantly on the hunt for a higher quality of education, and therefore are more inclined to switch schools. Other factors, such as racial and ethnic microaggressions, as discussed later, have also caused young people to change schools.

Some young people in the subsample experienced limited school mobility across communities or cities, and therefore remained with their classmates for most of their school careers. Flower, a 16-year-old Jamaican American girl who most recently attended a community school in Suburb 8, noted: "It's such a small school. The kids I know from my first grade, I still know them my senior year. So it's not as if like anything has changed. They're the same faces I see every single day." Jerimih also had this kind of experience with his peers: "I had many friends that we would move [together] from grade to grade and so we would know each other." Like the other participants, Molly, a 17-year-old Jamaican-American girl who most recently attended a community school in Suburb 7, also had a common school experience with many of her classmates. She noted that she didn't have to constantly make new friends. She stated: "I started in kindergarten, and I went to school with those same people until eighth grade…I didn't really have to constantly meet new people or learn new trades 'cuz I already knew everyone like the back of my hand." Not all of the young people had a consistent shared school experience with all of their peers like Molly.

While some of the participants changed school systems, many went with a small group of their peers into this new environment. Spiderman explained that this made his transition into a suburban magnet school easy: "The first year was pretty easy. I wasn't really nervous. I was going into a place where I already had some friends." Devon explained that during his transition to middle school, he was able to establish a friendship group in an unfamiliar environment: "A lot of my friends, we all found each other on the first day and it was like, 'Oh, okay we got our group, so now we're set.'" In her technical high school, Jaclyn had a similar experience that resulted in a close bond with one of her peers she had known for a long time. She said: "We didn't really talk in [elementary school]. Freshman year, that's when we got really close, because

it's like we didn't know anybody at [our technical high school] and we were so used to each

other." This wasn't the case for everyone, however, as Molly explained: "It's weird 'cuz people

that I saw every day and I still see sometimes at school from [elementary school], I don't talk to

them that much, I don't have any of those same relationships that I used to have."

Molly went from a very small private school to a large community school in Suburb 7.

Making this transition without a support group of her peers was challenging. She explained:

"When I got to the high school, it was so many of everything that I've never seen and

experienced and…it was a shock. I didn't know how to handle certain things…I didn't have that

safety net that I used to." When Allie, a 17-year-old Multi-racial/ethnic girl who most recently

attended a community school in Downtown Greenville, transitioned to a new elementary

community school in Downtown Greenville, she found herself in a similar situation, which

caused her not to enjoy her new school environment: "I didn't like it really, at all. None of my

friends were there. I didn't really like the teachers. I was also all by myself." Purple, a 15-year-

old Multi-racial/ethnic girl who most recently attended a magnet school in Downtown

Greenville, like Allie, found the transition between schools without her peers to be emotional.

She said: "I guess a bad memory was leaving all my friends. I didn't wanna leave my friends,

like I was so close to them." In order to try to avoid this difficult transition, many young people

told stories about how they protested adults' decisions to place them in an unfamiliar school

without their friends.

Doritos expressed how he objected to his mom's choice: "I protested against going there

the whole summer before, I wanted to go to [the community middle school] with all my friends.

My mom wasn't havin' it." Doritos, however, continued that he was happy his mom didn't

capitulate to his pleas, "I'm glad she wasn't havin' it because I made a lot of friends there. It was

pretty cool." Sweetheart described a similar interaction, "I mean before I was so mad, 'cuz you

know I had my two friends and I didn't want to leave them, but then I'm kind of happy 'cuz like

now I have like more friends and more opportunities." While Doritos and Sweetheart gained new

friends from their school transitions, other participants explained how it caused them to lose

friends. When Jaclyn transitioned to her technical high school in Downtown Greenville freshman

year, she explained that she and her best friend grew apart: "'Cuz you know, we were in middle

school together and then it's like, I don't see her anymore." Jaclyn's school experience shaped

her relationships with her friends.

As previously explained, the adults of Greenville Cities, and an abstract lottery system,

were the primary actors in determining where young people attended school. In addition, these

young people's educational experience was also shaped by school mobility, which led to shifts in

friendships. While some consistently attended one school, or schools in one district, others

changed schools, school type and districts in order to find the highest quality of education (see

Table 8). For some, their friendships remained consistent as they shared a similar educational

experience as their peers. Others became close with a small group of their peers who, due to the

lottery, were able to gain access to privileged academic environments together. Finally, some of

the young people explained that they had grown apart, or became distant with some of their peers

either due to a change in school, or other external factors. The next section of this paper

examines more closely the peer consequences for those who choose either an inter-district or

intra-district 'choice' school.

Peer Culture in Transition. Due to the racial and ethnic integration reform, peer

cultures were often in transition. While most resided in Downtown Greenville, many either

attended an inter-district school housed in Downtown Greenville, or a school outside of their

home community (see Table 7). Young people who left their districts had varying levels of assimilation into new peer cultures. Those who started attending magnet schools generally had smooth transitions due to the diversity of the student body. While many young people had difficulty transitioning into predominately White schools, others had an easy time assimilating. For those who had a difficult transitioning, they often found solace in connecting with peers who also resided in Downtown Greenville or were of the same race or ethnicity. It was difficult to transition into new peer cultures as those young people shared long histories and already had pre-established friendships. Unwelcoming, and judgmental peers, the racial and ethnic makeup of the student body, and differences in behavior also were factors, which contributed to difficult transitions.

In addition to transitioning into a new peer culture outside of their home district, young people in Greenville Cities sometimes transitioned back into their home districts. Sometimes this transition was because of issues related to traveling, or family schedules, but more often because young people did not assimilate into their peer cultures or were actively facing a hostile and unwelcoming environment. For some young people, this transition back was easy and a positive experience; but for others, it had its own difficulties.

Transitioning Into New Peer Cultures. The young people who left their district school communities, either due to the lottery or another application process, experienced differences in transitioning into the new local peer cultures. Those who attended magnet schools, relayed a generally smooth transition. As magnet schools are inter-district and therefore pull students from different neighborhoods, districts, and cities, they often have a diverse student body. Young people in Greenville Cities expressed that this was advantageous, especially considering friendship. Happy, who most recently attended a magnet school in Downtown Greenville

explained why she preferred magnet schools to other school types: "I just like being at magnet schools 'cuz you get to meet so many types of people." While the diverse student body was important to Happy, Caridad, a 17-year-old Latina girl, who most recently attended an agricultural school in Suburb 4, explained that she enjoyed the size of her Downtown Greenville magnet middle school: "It was the best…I had a lot of friends. It's such a small school. It's a magnet school…everyone was really nice and I probably knew everyone in the class and everyone was so sweet." Similarly, Purple, who currently most recently attended a magnet school in Downtown Greenville said: "I always felt accepted in all my schools." This kind of painless transition many magnet school students experienced, however, was not the case for all young people.

While some young people had difficult transitions, many had strategies or experiences that helped to make the transition easier including having peers from their home communities in new school environments. Flower for example, explained that her peers from Downtown Greenville could understand and relate to her experience in Suburb 8. She said: "They knew what I was going through, because they went through the same thing. We're all coming from [Downtown Greenville], going into a whole new environment. We're slowly adapting to it but we're still not accepted." Similarly, Basketball explained that he and his peer from Downtown Greenville support one another in Suburb 1: "Luke's also from [Downtown Greenville], he's on the same bus and the reason we have a connection is because like my mom used to work with his mom…we kinda like stick together." Other kinds of similarities also tied students together.

For Doritos, it was not a similarity in residential location but in ethnicity that was important, as he felt accepted "if there are more people like [him] around." He notes that by befriending an older boy with the same ethnicity, he had an easier transition into his middle

school: "Nick was older, so I learned a lot from him. Also he was Puerto Rican. So like, that made me just like him a lot more 'cuz he knew like the cultural stuff. He grew up with the same stuff." Not all young people had peers who they could relate to while transitioning between schools which made the process of being happy in a new peer culture difficult.

While Doritos had Nathan in his middle school transition, he did not have a peer he could relate to when he began attending a private school: "It was almost like every day was my first day." He explained that most of his peers had been in private schools their whole lives, and lived outside of Greenville Cities. These private school peers were not always kind: "Some kids eventually like found out where I was from. I don't know how they found out I was gettin' financial aid to go there and some of them would try to pick on me about it." Despite this difficulty, Doritos was able to make a few friends who understood how it felt to be an outsider. He explained: "Brian I liked, 'cuz Brian was Asian, but he was adopted into a German family. So he felt out of place at home. I felt out of place at [private school]. So, we just kinda clicked."

Molly, conversely, transitioned from a private to community school for high school. Although the inverse of Doritos' experience, Molly still shared similar sentiments of feeling like she was an outsider. She said: "When I got to the high school, it was a whole different story… I was all like doe eyed. I didn't know what to expect. I was exposed to a lot…I'm learning and trying to grasp like what's cool." In addition to trying to navigate what was cool in her new local peer culture, Molly was also navigating a new community of peers: "I didn't really have any friends. So, I was learnin' new friends, and learnin' who was actually trying to be my friend." Other students who started attending open-choice suburban schools in the middle of their academic careers had a similar experience when trying to navigate existing peer cultures.

Caridad, who switched to an agricultural center in an open-choice suburban school her freshman year of high school, explained the difficulty in making friends in a new environment. She said:

> The transition from [Downtown Greenville] to [Suburb 4] was kind of easy. No, it was really difficult, to be honest, because I really liked my [magnet] middle school [in Downtown Greenville]. And [Suburb 4], it's kind of far. People in [Suburb 4], they've been going there since kindergarten. They knew each other. So, they've already like defined cliques and friendships. So when new people come, they're kinda like hesitant to talk to you and stuff like that.

Allie, experienced increased difficulty in making friends in school when she moved residential locations and started at a new school in the middle of the year. She said: "That school started already, so they like already had their cliques, their friends, so… it's kinda a rough year." Not only did Allie have difficulty adjusting to the new peer culture because her peers had a shared friendship history, but also because they were not welcoming or warm to an outsider. She said, "The people are really stuck up. When I went to [a suburban community school] people judged me like a lot 'cuz of my accent they said I had, like they just looked down on me 'cuz I'm not from there." Allie went on to explain that others from Downtown Greenville had a misconception of her educational experience in the suburban school, because it was considered a "nice neighborhood." She said, "Everyone thinks, 'Oh just 'cuz you're in a nice neighborhood, you're having a nice life.' It's not like that…I was there for like two months, and I couldn't do it anymore, I was like, 'I gotta go.'" Allie was not the only participant to experience this.

Like Allie, Flower, a Jamaican-American girl, explained in her interview, that she had experienced a very difficult transition from her open-choice community school in Suburb 8 to a charter school in Downtown Greenville due to differences in the racial/ethnic make-up of the student body, and differences in behavior. She said:

> It was weird 'cuz I've never been around so many Black kids in my life. I was
> really concerned. I was like, wait how do I act?...Like when I'm like surrounded
> by people of my ethnicity, I see myself standing out 'cuz the way that I dress, the
> way that I present myself …It was too much. All the kids they weren't trying to
> learn. They weren't trying to do anything. I was trying to learn, which is why they
> thought I was so bougie and stuck up, 'cuz I was really trying to learn while they
> were like fooling around in class.

Eventually, Flower's mother became aware of the difficulty Flower was facing in her transition

to the charter school in Downtown Greenville: "Mom was like, 'Where are your friends from

school?' I was like, 'I don't have any...Cuz they're all mean and gross…' she shadowed me one

day at and then she was like, 'Why are you in this school?'" Flower went on to explain her

mother's subsequent actions: "Luckily, we had connections in the open-choice program; so, she

put me back…my mom was like, "Hm." Snatch. Took me out Christmas vacation. I was back in

Suburb 8 in January." Due to difficulties in transition, Flower returned to her open-choice

community school in Suburb 8.

   Returning to Local Peer Cultures and Communities. While many young people left

their local peer cultures and home communities, many also then returned. This transition was

complex and different for students depending on their level of assimilation and the length of time

they had been away. For Erica, a 17-year-old Jamaican-American girl who most recently

attended a magnet school in East Greenville, the transition back to her home community was

simple: "I left [the suburban private school]. When I came back all my friends were like happy to

see me and stuff." Similar to Erica, Zander, a 16-year-old Latina girl who most recently attended

a magnet school in Downtown Greenville, also felt a sense of ease with regards to friendship

after returning to Downtown Greenville schools: "I was bullied [at a suburban school]. So going

home to the neighborhood where kids wanted to hang out with me was the cool part." Doritos,

who only spent one semester at private school, transitioned easily into his community high

school. Like Flower, Dorito's mother eventually encouraged his return to his district schools: "I

complained to my mom as much as I could and she wasn't havin' it… [Then] she was actually

forced to see the kids and the parents…Even she thought it was too different, and it wasn't good

for me." He went on to explain that this transition to his district high school was easy, and full of

past friends: "It was everyone I knew from elementary school back in the same school again.

Plus everyone who I had met in middle school. Then I got to know even more people. So, I like

it there." Not everyone, however, had such an easy transition.

Allie, for example, relayed disappointment in returning to Downtown Greenville schools

after spending time in a suburban part of Green State. She said: "Coming back is just like,

'Damn, I'm back to these schools that don't really care. And the people that just have attitudes

all the time.'" Other young people expressed that the transition was difficult because they had

already assimilated to their suburban peer cultures. One aspect of tension in this transition was

individual style. Romollo, a 15-year-old Multi-racial/ethnic boy who most recently attended a

magnet school in East Greenville, for example, said: "It was just different the way that they

showed themselves from the way that I showed myself. People would have more respect for

me…my tie, shirt tucked in and everything…My appearance was different." Zander also

expressed having difficulty in navigating the differences in style and behavior when returning to

Downtown Greenville. She said:

> I had adapted myself so much to fit in to the suburban lifestyle. I spoke differently
> than the rest of the kids…I made my hair pin-straight. I'd wear a headband to
> school, my knee-high socks. Pristine and perfect isn't what everybody wanted [in
> Downtown Greenville] so I got picked on for being that way. I got picked on for
> the way I talked and I didn't realize I was talking that way.

Many young people, like Zander, discussed the difficulty in navigating differences when transitioning between peer cultures. This, however, was not the only way that the reform shaped peer cultures. With mobility, physical or emotional distance was also created.

Experiencing Distance. Distance from their school communities had a very real effect on the daily lives and friendships for young people in Greenville Cities. For example, Sweetheart who lives 12.7 miles from her school in Suburb 6 explains that it's hard to maintain her friendships: "I mean it sucks [not living in school community]. 'Cuz when I want to see them, I can't like automatically." She does go on, however, to explain that living elsewhere does have its perks: "It's also been good too, because [Suburb 6] is a small town. So you know, like everyone knows everyone's business." Distance did not only affect those who lived far away from their schools.

While Happy only lives 3.1 miles away from her Downtown Greenville magnet school, many of her friends live farther away. She explained: "I go to magnet school. I think half the kids are from [Downtown Greenville] and half the kids are from like all over [Green State]. 'Cuz I have a friend who drives like an hour to get to school…every single day." Happy goes on to explain that not many of her close friends live near her: "Most of my other friends live in like [East Greenville] or, I don't know, just like other places." Distance, however, not only affected friendships.

Jerimih talked extensively about the way in which the distance associated with attending a magnet school in East Greenville not only affected his friendships, but also his daily life. Firstly, he explained, "I don't really talk to many people [in my neighborhood]…because I don't really know anybody because I go to a different school." This was not the only effect caused by the distance between his house and his school. He explained the lived realities of traveling to

school: "[My bus ride took] an hour because I would be picked up like 6:10 am and it would take

an hour for the bus driver to go around [my neighborhood] and pick everyone up and then head

to East Greenville." This bus length, as well as other obligations had ripple effects for Jerimih's

daily life:

> It took an hour to get to school every day. School starts from 7:30 to 3 o'clock, 3
> o'clock, there would be after school activities, extracurricular activities, in order
> for me to compete in the admissions process in college, you kind of need
> extracurricular activities…I get home 5:30pm…coming home I would need to do
> chores or I would need to watch my brother as my dad went out and worked. And
> I had to eat dinner. You know, I was only really settled after 9 o'clock. Then,
> that's prime time homework.

In order to understand the interaction between the racial and ethnic reform and young people's

lived realities and friendship, it is important to understand how these young people

conceptualized friendship in their metropolitan area.

Young People's Friendship Peer Culture in Greenville Cities

As Cosaro (2014) explains, young people actively construct their own worlds and peer

cultures, which they use to make meaning and develop their own self-concepts. These peer

cultures, however, can only be understood within context. This section specifies the context in

which the young people of Greenville Cities construct their peer cultures and friendships.

Conceptualizing Friendship. Perhaps most central to young people's idea of friendship

in Greenville Cities were the close ties or bonds that connect them to their friends. Jaclyn, a 15-

year-old Latina girl who most recently attended a technical school in Downtown Greenville

specified that friendship is more complicated than just knowing someone for a long time: "most

people think friendship is about how long you've known a person and sometimes that's true…I

think it's all about bonding." Friendship bonds differed in terms of intimacy, importance, and

durability on a scale of 'associate' or 'school friend,' to 'family' or 'best friend'.[19]

While young people in Greenville Cities listed many people they considered friends, they

attested that mere interaction did not indicate a close bond. Caridad, explained: "I know some

friends I have, they're not really my friends, but I talk to them." Many young people referred to

these periphery friends as 'associates,' or 'school friends'. Conversely, young people

conceptualized very close friendship bonds to be similarly intimate to those they share with their

families. Spiderman said: "My friendship is like, that's my brother right there. Like the same

way I'll treat my family, I'll treat them." Jaclyn used the same family refrain to imply

importance: "She's my best friend. Like, that's my sister."[20] Jaclyn went on to explain exactly

what a best friend was:

> My best friend, that's the immediate person I would go to talk to about anything
> and everything. Like that's who I put everything into. Anything I've ever felt, no
> matter if it's dumb or not, she'd be there to listen to it. I mean, a friend is also
> that, but sometimes you don't feel comfortable. But a best friend, like we've
> bonded way more.

Young people provided a variety of definitions for best friends.

For some, it entailed a long history together. Ralph for example, explained: "I grew up

with them, like we went through fights together like arguments and all that. And it's just like

those are still my friends." In addition to a long friendship history, young people in Greenville

Cities also highlighted the similarities they share with their best friends. Flower highlighted

similarities in personality, saying: "She's basically me. She's literally me. It's like, we're both

outgoing and we're funny. We both have that sensitive situation." Other young people expressed

similarities in interests. For example, Ralph, when speaking about his best friend, said: "He got

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[19] While the research team asked participants, "Who's your greatest friend?" all participants used the colloquial term 'best friend' in response. Therefore, this terminology has been adopted for this paper.
[20] Names of participant's friends have also been changed throughout the text to maintain confidentiality.

the same interests that I do! He likes sneakers. If I see him I'll be like, 'Yo, you've seen these

new shoes that 'bout to come out?' We'll have a conversation for like hours, talkin' about

sneakers." Ralph went on to explain, however, that it's not only their similarities in interest that

brought him and his best friend together, but also their similar school experiences: "We do

everything together. Like we go to practice, we play for the same team, we play football

together. You know, we do homework and all that extra stuff together." Here, Ralph highlighted

not only the closeness of his bond, but the means in which this bond was demonstrated. Young

people in Greenville Cities elaborated that while friendship can be conceptualized as a bond with

varying levels of intimacy and importance, it is also something that needs to be demonstrated by

spending quality time together, helping one another, or consistently and openly communicating.

Young people in Greenville Cities also identified certain qualities that are important for

friends to possess, including being trustworthy, honest, loyal and fun. Spiderman highlighted the

importance of trust: "If I don't trust you, I just back away because trust nowadays is hard to find.

When you find it, you don't wanna leave it. So when you have a friend, make sure the bond

keeps tight with trust." Sweetheart also explained that regardless of specific qualities, friendship

is central to an individual's wellbeing and quality of life. She explained: "Sometimes you do

need somebody. You might not think you do, but there's a person you need to feel comfortable

talking with, because you can't just hold it in all the time. It's not good to." Friendship was

important to the well-being of young people, and was also something that was actively produced

and maintained.

Producing and Maintaining Friendship. With this concept of what a friend is, what

friends do, and what qualities friends possess, the young people of Greenville Cities shared their

experiences as to how these friendships came to be. For many, friendship grew out of

commonality of experience. Shared schooling, above all else, seemed to be the primary way in which the young people of Greenville Cities made their friends. For many, making friends in school was a natural process. Ezekiel, explained: "There wasn't no problem with me makin' friends or like acquaintances or whatever. Like I just talked to people." Within school, many young people also made friends on the court or on the field.

Sports unified teens and cultivated friendships across Greenville Cities. Many pointed out that this is because they were obligated to talk to their teammates; as Jaclyn in a Downtown Greenville technical school explained: "You have no choice but to speak to each other." For some young people, sports were a way for them to easily make new friends when transitioning between schools. This was the case for Turquoise, a 15-year-old African-American boy who most recently attended a community school in Suburb 1. He said his team association helped him make friends at a new school in Suburb 1 and also served as a form of protection: "I got to talk with the upper classmen. So then like in school, I see 'em it's like, 'Oh like we're friends' and stuff like that. So then I don't get made fun of or anything." Factors other than sports also influenced the creation of friendships.

Many young people agreed that age and school size are other important factors. For many, the smaller the school, the easier it was to make friends. Spiderman, for example, reflected on his magnet elementary school in Downtown Greenville: "Like that school is so small, so you get to know everybody." Similarly, most participants found it easier to make friends when they were younger. Turquoise reflected, "It was easy [to make friends] because basically you just play around." As explained by the young people, friendship is not expressed only in dyadic form. There are also friendship groups, which unite many peers.

Young people in Greenville Cities had differing views regarding friendship groups, as their experiences varied across age. Happy experienced changing friendship groups over time with regards to gender: "When I was younger it was a biological thing…I think it was more separate [between boys and girls] when we were in like first, second, third. 'Cuz then after that I think it was more mixed." Past elementary school, the organization of friendship groups became more complicated and less gender dependent. Participants indicated that in high school, the groups tended to be organized around those who shared the same interests or activities.

Conflict in School. At times, conflict arose between friends and most often these problems stemmed from bullying, fighting, or because of differences in behavior. Ralph experienced bullying in middle school after immigrating to the US: "Most of the kids knew that I was from Haiti so they'll try to make fun of me about that. I didn't really have a problem with it. I used to be like, 'Yeah I'm from Haiti! What's up with that?'" While Ralph eventually became close friends with the individuals who bullied him, this was not the case for Sweetheart. She eventually left her community school in Downtown Greenville for an open-choice community school in Suburb 5 because of incessant bullying.

Many participants also shared stories of physical fights. While some had only been bystanders, other young people had been in fights themselves. Allie, shared her story of how her first fight began in sixth grade: "I was on a school bus… [This] girl called my mom a name. I got mad, I told her don't do it again. She did…I turned into her seat, and I was like, 'What did you say?' She said it again." While Allie ended up having the police called during her first fight, not every altercation had such serious ramifications. Ralph light-heartedly explained his first fight: "I remember the first fight I got into, right? We fought. The next day, I said, 'Hi. And he just

ignored me, I was like, 'No? Alright!'" In addition to physical fights, behavioral choices were also a source of conflict.

Young people expressed that peers' behavioral choices caused their friendships to end. Doritos, for example, said he ended one friendship because his friend "started doin' and sellin' drugs." Allie, explained the complexity that she felt towards her peers who chose to engage in divergent behaviors. She notes:

> When they're little they say, 'Oh yeah, I'm never gonna smoke. I'm never gonna sell drugs.' …It's 'cuz the environment… If you hang out around people that don't do work, that never want to go to school, eventually that's gonna become you…Like, this is not where I want to be.

Ezekiel, similarly explains that he has seen "negativity" effect his peers' paths, but as they went to different schools, they lost touch: "The way that their path went is way different from mine, and it's hard to look at their path because negativity just impacted their lives. Being with the wrong people. [We went to] different schools… So, once we split up, we lost contact with each other." Ezekiel's narrative of losing friends due school mobility was common and indicative of a larger pattern of shifting friendships in the school reform, as previously expressed. Another narrative that was recurrent among young people in Greenville Cities was that of having to navigate differences in race, ethnicity, and SES.

Navigating Differences: Race, Ethnicity, and Socio-Economic Status

Expectedly, young people within the racial and ethnic integration reform often had to navigate differences in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This section covers differences in diversity across school types and examples of institutional and personal racist attacks. How young people made meaning in these environments and navigated differences between their peers is discussed.

School Diversity. The young people in Greenville Cities are experiencing a racial and ethnic integration reform and are therefore aware of diversity, or the lack thereof in their school communities. Consistent with their goal, the magnet schools in Greenville Cities have racially and ethnically diverse student bodies, while other schools tend to have more homogenous populations. The makeup of these student bodies has an impact on identity, as expressed by Jerimih. He explained that since previously attending a predominantly White school in Florida, his view of himself and his relation to the world has shifted: "I never really thought about how racism or race defined me back then…I realized things coming from [Downtown Greenville] to [East Greenville] to study, I think it was that diversity that made me realize who I am." This was common for many young people who attended magnet schools.

Young people attending magnet school were quick to highlight the diversity in their school communities. Ezekiel explained: "[There were] kids from like different cities coming in. So, it's more diverse. It's good to meet like more races. So you get to know about them." Ezekiel went on to explain the racial and ethnic diversity in his Downtown Greenville magnet school: "It's Blacks, Whites, Asian, it's like, Puerto Rican, Spanish [Latino/a], Indian, it's like a whole buncha races there. Nobody really pays attention to that." Like Ezekiel, Jerimih also attended a magnet school. He explained the different kinds of diversity he saw in his community, "I think minorities are the majority…females are the majority as well…socioeconomic backgrounds are diverse. It's a magnet school. People are pulled from different towns across [Green County]." Jerimih, while cognizant of his own schools' racial and ethnic diversity, continued to explain the complexities across Greenville Cities' schools:

> I've had the luxury of being in a magnet school, I look at [Downtown Greenville community high schools] and I know that they're predominantly filled with Black people or minorities. I know the [Suburb 3] high school is strictly White. It's not

entirely their fault. You know there are circumstances. There's a history behind the reason why they're segregated already. And then they segregate even more.

Magnet schools, therefore, seemed to really be the only option for young people in Greenville Cities to experience a racially and ethnically diverse school community.

Young people explained that Downtown Greenville community schools, private schools, and suburban community schools all lacked diversity. In her Downtown Greenville community elementary school, Caridad noted while many races and ethnicities were represented, others were absent: "Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Peruvians, different Hispanics, then there was like the African Americans, a lot of Portuguese people too…but never like Caucasian, Indian, or Asians." This kind of racial segregation was also seen in private schools. Jerimih explained: "[My private elementary school] was predominantly Black. I only saw like two or three people." Conversely, Molly noted in her private school: "There was only 'bout three or four Black kids in my class from about first grade to eighth grade…there was no Black teacher…They wanted it to be a diverse student wise, but they never really did that teacher wise." As expressed by these young people, race and ethnicity were central to shaping their school experience. Therefore, many young people shared the ways in which they made meaning of race, ethnicity, and racism in their schools.

Making Meaning of Race and Ethnicity, and Racism in School. For the young people in Greenville Cities experiencing the racial and ethnic integration reform, negotiating differences of race and ethnicity, as well as instances of racism was a regular part of their educational careers. Ralph, for example, said: "There's still some people, that you know, dislike you just 'cuz of your color and stuff like that. So, you know, the suburbs schools and stuff like, if you're like dark skin and stuff, they like won't probably like you." This was a striking experience for Zander when she attended a predominantly White suburban school. She explained: "I was Latina and I

was from [Downtown Greenville], I went to school in the suburbs… this population is majority

Caucasians…nobody wanted me in there, 'ghetto thuglings, hood rats'… You wanted kids to

accept you." While not everyone experienced direct racist aggressions, all experienced a school

system with institutional racism. Their experiences are complex, sometimes contradictory, and

central to their peer cultures and friendships.

     Positive Interracial, Interethnic Interactions. Some young people, like those previously

discussed at magnet schools also experienced positive interactions across race and ethnicity.

Jaclyn, for example, explained the commonalities she understood between her and one of her

early childhood friends:

> She was like the first friend's house I've ever gone to. And it was weird, because
> she's Jamaican. So it's like a different culture. So like I walked into her house and
> her mom's cooking. I'm like, 'Wow this is a thing, jerk chicken, yum!' It was
> interesting walking in there, seeing how different it is, and then also seeing like
> some similarities, like she was cookin' rice. Puerto Rican's cook rice. Everybody
> cooks rice. And you know, tasting it, it didn't taste any different, and yeah.

Jaclyn had this experience while attending a Downtown Greenville community elementary

school. Some other students, who attended predominantly White schools, however, also had

positive cross-racial and ethnic interactions and felt at home in their school communities.

     Romollo, for example, expressed that he had a very smooth transition into a

predominantly White private school in the suburbs. He explains, "Even though I wasn't the same

race, it was just the way that they took me in…They encouraged me to do things. They had a

positive impact on me." Like Romollo, Sweetheart easily transitioned into her predominantly

White, suburban open-choice school. She explained how she felt when first entering the

community: "Everyone was so nice, and I was like, 'What is going on?!' And like the teachers

were so funny. And I was like, 'What?! Like teachers have humor?!'" She continued that school

was "fun" and "everyone there [was] a lot nicer." She, explained that this might be due to her

transition at a younger age: "Some people who go during high school year, they're so [used to] the [Downtown Greenville] life. They don't like coming there. They're real hood I guess, they're real slanging. They don't like certain things that they're not familiar with it." While Sweetheart transitioned to the predominantly White suburb in middle school, others transitioned even earlier.

Turquoise, an African-American boy who most recently attended a community school in the predominantly White Suburb 1, had positive things to say about his educational experience and predominantly White peers. Turquoise explained that by beginning school in Suburb 1 in kindergarten, he was able to transcend barriers that might have otherwise occurred because of his race and ethnicity. He explained:

> Going to kindergarten you bein' like, not the only Black kid but only a couple more, you didn't get put on the spot. Growing up with them, they look at you like you're one of them, so it doesn't even matter. It's like we're all like the same people basically.

With this being said, however, Turquoise was still quick to comment that his experience as a Black kid from Downtown Greenville was different than his Black friend who lives in Suburb 1: "Jamie is another Black kid, so you kinda relate. But, I live in [Downtown Greenville], he lives in [Suburb 1]. His lifestyle growing up compared to mine is different… I went to his house and was like, 'Oh my Lord,' you know? " Unlike Turquoise, Flower, a Jamaican-American girl explained that she didn't seamlessly fit in, and had mixed feelings about her experience: "I've been going to school in [Suburb 8] my entire life, I'm still known as that [Downtown Greenville] kid... I feel like I'm not socially accepted. But…I'm not there to make friends. I'm there to get my diploma and my education." While Flower expressed that she has never felt accepted due to her race and ethnicity and the fact that she lives in Downtown Greenville, she explained that being a student of color in a predominately White school isn't all bad. She said: "Being a minority in that school you stand out, I like standing out…it inserts you for more opportunities."

In addition to providing opportunities, Flower says that it also gave her a level of protection in her school community: "I feel completely safe in Suburb 8 because as a minority. I feel like I'm a necessity to them. Because like, if a Black kid gets hurt in a suburban school, you know the media's gonna be all over it." As represented in these narratives, being a student of color in a predominantly White school has real, lived peer consequences. While some, like Romollo and Turquoise easily assimilated, they were still outsiders due to their residential locations. For others, like Flower, despite her long shared school experience with her predominantly White peers, she always felt like an outsider due to her race and ethnicity, and her residential location. She noted that while she had access to opportunities, and a specific form of protection, this had its social costs. While these students expressed stories of their racial identities and inclusion at a personal level, other young people noted how they had to navigate race on an institutional level, proliferated by adult power holders.

Learning Racism. As expressed in CRT, race and racism are social constructions, and are therefore taught. In turn, it is not surprising to hear that many of the young people in Greenville Cities encountered racism with the adults in their lives. In some instances, adults in the school community were the primary perpetrators. Zander, for example, explained how the teachers at her predominantly White suburban community school systematically used her as a student of color to please outside authorities. She explained: "If the superintendent came, they'd force me to play….I'd be like, 'I don't want to play'. I wanna be on the swings by myself because I'm not gonna sit around kids who are gonna insult me all day!" Like Zander, Doritos also had a teacher who perpetuated inequality. He explained that while at his suburban private school he volunteered in a tutoring program that engaged Downtown Greenville students. He went on to explain the experience: "I got into an argument with the lady orchestrating it…she used the word

"ghetto" and I didn't like it. So I told her, 'That's not a way you should say that, some of them

just need help and can't afford it.'" Other adult authorities outside of school, also taught racism.

In addition to adults in school communities, parental figures also proved important in

teaching racism. Zander had a negative experience in her suburban open-choice community

school with the parents of her predominately White peers:

> [A parent] goes, 'I don't want my kid associating with a kid, a street rat.' Like she
> was calling me names to my face! She was saying it to the teacher, but I'm
> standing right there! About how our school is a, 'Fucked up place, how the fuck
> could they let kids like me in there? These kids are gonna go nowhere. Why are
> you bringing them in here? Why are you even giving them a chance?' I was truly
> confused as a kid. Because as a kid, I didn't see what she was talking about!
> Because I didn't grow up in the hood! I grew up in my grandmother's nice and
> house with a picket fence.

Zander went on to explain how she blamed the parents, rather than the students for her

mistreatment in the predominately White, suburban open-choice school. She explained: "I don't

blame the suburban kids for judging me on my skin, where I was from or how I looked. I felt it

was their parents, they were the ones who would push for us not to be there." While Zander let

the behavior of her peers pass, Flower insisted that this was unacceptable. She explained: "Kids

should not be influenced by what their parents' beliefs are. You shouldn't be scared of a certain

type of lifestyle because your parents are. You should be able to be your own person and reach

out and be yourself." Unfortunately, however, a lot of young people had learned racism and

therefore it was a common occurrence among peer interactions.

Navigating Racism with Peers. It was not just adults who contributed in creating an

unwelcoming and unequal space for students of color. Most of the stories from these young

people are focused on peer interactions. Spiderman theorized that this aggression was because of

differences in race and ethnicity across towns. He explained: "There's always is a bad rep

between kids from different towns. Like when my brother went to a [Suburb], they used to like

frown on [Downtown Greenville] kids for no reason…Especially cuz it was a town." Stories

from the young people indicate that Spiderman's sentiment is not unique, as many of them

consistently had racism shape their school and peer experiences.

Doritos explained that in his West Greenville community high school, spaces and friend

groups were racially segregated, which often led to a series of problems. He explained:

> Usually there's problems between the Black kids and the Hispanic kids, which
> resulted in a brawl in the middle of the hallway one day…the rest of that week, it
> was almost like a race war. Like every time someone saw someone else who was
> Spanish [Latino/a], it was immediately a problem…Someone said something
> about someone's sister, [but] then it became a race thing. It went from the sister,
> then when it was over someone yelled out 'nigger' and that wasn't the end of it.

While there were other stories of intense conflict between racial and ethnic groups, many shared

more nuanced experiences and examples of subtle racial aggression and inequality in their

schools.

Cultural Appropriation. Some young people, for example, told stories about how their

peers would try to mimic behaviors of their peers of color by 'acting Black'. Sweetheart, a Latina

girl, explained that this was common in her open-choice community school in Suburb 6: "They

try to act Black, they sag their pants, they use the N word. Then they'll listen to rap music by

Drake and all them. So, they'll like rap it and we're just like, 'Shut up, you sound terrible,

stooooop.'" Flower, a Jamaican-American girl, experienced something similar with her friend

from Suburb 8:

> She tries way too hard. 'Cuz it's like, she's the only White girl in our group of
> friends. So, it's just like she wants to act Black, but like it's just not working. And
> like she makes jokes and it's just like, I get offended not because of anything, it's
> just the fact that she's White…I'm like, "Why are you saying that to me?!" Like,
> "Oh why do you guys wear weave?" I'm just like, "Why you askin' a dumbass
> question like that? Like do you wanna get slapped?"

For Flower, and many of the other girls, their physical appearance became a site of

hostility from their peers.

Girls Bodies and Voices, a Site for Racism. Flower, a Jamaican-American girl, explained

that reactions to her body and physical appearance differed in geographical locations, and with

the race and ethnicity of her peers. She said: "In [Downtown Greenville] there are girls who like

want to be like me. They'll be like, 'Oh where'd you get your hair from? I love your skin

complexion.'" In her residential community, her physicality was admired by her peers and was

even a source of envy. In her school community, however, she was treated completely

differently: "In [Suburb 8] they're like, 'You wear a weave. Da-da-da. Like why are you so

dark?'" Not only did Flower receive conflicting messages about her hair and her complexion, the

way she dressed her body also became a means for other to pass judgment. She explained:

> When I came to [Suburb 8], I was like being hood is not cute. Why am I trying be
> hood so bad? And that's when it changed up, you can say I like conformed into
> culture. I kind of haven't, but I kind of have. Like I'm trying to you know throw
> everything in it and then create myself. But it's just like, it's still not
> there…People will say I'm White, because the way that I dress. People be like,
> 'Oh Flower, you dress so proper. You dress so White.' And I'm like, 'It's not me
> dressing White. It's just the way that my style is.'

Like Flower, many Latina girls also experienced their physical bodies as an object for racist

commentary but their experiences were different and specific to their ethnicity.

Due to their self identified lighter complexions, Zander and Allie experienced their

bodies in different ways depending on geographical location. Zander explained: "I went to a

suburban school district and was picked on by kids for being the Latina girl from this inner-city.

Then I switched to the inner city and I was picked on for being the White girl." While in the

predominantly White suburbs, Zander had a particularly traumatizing experience because she

was a "Puerto Rican with curly, Black girl hair." She explained, "I got my hair got cut in

elementary school…there were these kids that would always pick on me and said they were

gonna cut my hair. And one day, the kid truly cut my hair." In turn, Zander's hair became a

source of personal contention and she continually tried to alter it: "I wanted to fit in… I did

everything to make my hair look like the rest of the girls…'Cuz I didn't want someone to look at

me differently…my hair was kinky, it was dark, it was curly, and it was different." For Latina

girls in Greenville Cities, aggression based on their physical appearance was often accompanied

by assumptions of other knowledge bases, most often language. As their peers often assumed the

ability to speak Spanish was congruent with their ethnicity. Allie explained:

> I look White, I know…and then when I tell people I'm Puerto Rican, 'No you're
> not! You talk White too!' How do I talk White? I don't know, I guess do I speak
> proper? I don't know [laughs]. Like, I don't know what it means either. I get so
> confused when people tell me I talk White… they never said that to me when I
> was at [suburban schools]. They always said you have an accent. And I never
> noticed it. Like, I realized I had an accent when I went there. 'Cuz people would
> look at me when I started talking. I'm like, 'What?' They're like, 'Where are you
> from?' But [in Downtown Greenville], people be like, 'You're White.' I'm like,
> 'No I'm not.' I tell them I'm Puerto Rican. They like, 'You don't talk Puerto
> Rican. You sound White.' I'm like, 'What?'

Caridad, also a Latina girl, explained that her peers in Suburb 3 often made assumptions about

her based on her ethnicity. She said: "They kinda assume that I know Spanish…they be askin'

me [in a patronizing voice] 'Are you from Puerto Rico?' I'm like, 'No, I live in [Downtown

Greenville]. I'm from [Green State].' I know more English than I do Spanish."

Problematic Peers. Like Flower, Erica, a Jamaican American girl, also abandoned

trying to make friends in her predominately suburban private school. She explained that

the way her peers treated her based on her race and ethnicity, ultimately caused her to

leave and return to her previous school community. She explained:

> I can't write no friends on at [suburban private school]. I was only there for like
> two weeks. I was the only Black person in there and I left. They tried to put me on
> like this high pedestal 'cuz I was Black. They just acted like I was so much

different from them. So, I told my mom I was ready to go. And I left. And went
back to [Downtown Greenville charter school], where I belonged. It was just
annoying.

For Erica, this experience happened in a predominately White community, with peers who were

strangers in which she shared no close, personal ties. However, this kind of racialized treatment

happened in other communities as well.

Jerimih explained that in his diverse magnet school in East Greenville, he also

experienced racism from his peers who he considered to be his friends. He explained one

example that happened during to college process: "The two White female students would, you

know, say, 'Well if I was Black,' or they would say, 'Oh it's because of the minority student that

applied that I didn't get in.' They blamed it on affirmative action." In Jerimih's story and the

previous stories, peers acted with racial hostility towards their peers of color. Some other

narratives, however, expressed that there was also prejudice shown by young people of color

towards their peers.

Racial Prejudice Against White Peers. Caridad, for example, noted that some of her peers

of color who travel to Suburb 3 with her from Downtown Greenville responded to instances of

racism with their own prejudice.

There are other people from [Downtown Greenville] that go to [Suburb
3]…they're not nice to the people from [Suburb 3]…They don't feel like people
from [Suburb 3] respect them. So they kinda are really rude and I hear them talk
about certain people. It makes me cringe. I kinda wish they [went back to
Downtown Greenville] so then the negativity won't be there and they won't make
me feel bad about making friends who go to [Suburb 3], because I do make
friends.

Like Caridad, Flower also experienced difficulty navigating tense relationships between her

friends of color who lived in Downtown Greenville, and her school peers who reside in Suburb

8. She explained:

> Alright so there was this party over in the south end, but mind you, we're [Downtown Greenville] kids going to a suburban area. So the suburban kids found out about it, and so she was like, "I don't want these kids going to my party. Da-da-da-da-da."... Like it made me so mad because I was just like, 'Why are you acting up?'…And then like the people in [Suburb 8] wanted to go, but she was like, how? Since they're so, you know, stuck up or whatever…she's gonna be affiliated with them, and she gonna be affiliated as stuck up. So, she didn't want all that to happen or whatever. And so, we were just like, 'Alright, then we're not gonna go to your petty little party…Because whatever.'

In addition to having to negotiate racism with their peers, and racial prejudice against their peers, the young people of Greenville Cities also explained that it wasn't just issues of race and ethnicity, but also socioeconomic status.

Negotiating Differences of Socioeconomic Status. In addition to having to navigate differences of race and ethnicity, young people also had to navigate differences in socio-economic status in the racial and ethnic integration reform. Often, these differences in combination with local peer cultures manifested themselves in visible differences in style.

Doritos notes that for the short time he attended a predominantly White private school, he had to negotiate differences in socioeconomic status for the first time. He explained: "A lot of people were like of a higher economic class and it was really weird meeting them, it was like they had all been in private schools their whole lives and I was used to public schools." Like Doritos, Allie also attended a school in which her peers were of a higher socioeconomic status. She explained that in this predominately White suburban schools, kids acted as if they were better than her: "Those kids are so stuck up. It's ridiculous. Like literally, they'd look at you and be like, 'You can't afford no shoes?' Like it's that bad…It's just like all the kids were like that." Allie goes on to explain one especially patronizing event with a stranger in the gym: "Some dude was like, 'Do want my phone? I'll give it to you for free.' I'm like, 'No, I'm okay.' He's like, 'Are you sure? I think you need it more than I do.' I'm like, 'I'm fine.'"

For Caridad, this inequality in SES between her and her peers made it difficult to be able to spend time with friends: "They be like, 'Oh! We're going to a field trip'…it cost like sixty dollars! And I be looking at them like 'I'm not that rich…' Most people in [Suburb 3] are like middle class, or like even higher than middle class." While Doritos, Allie, and Caridad learned to navigate having a lower socio-economic status than their peers, other young people relayed their experiences of navigating having a higher socio-economic status than their peers.

Zander, for example, explained that while her SES had changed dramatically over her life course, she currently considered herself of a higher SES than her peers. She nervously expressed: "I live in a really big house. I live in a house like my friends don't live in. My friends are going to see my house for the first time next weekend….and I live in a really big house." Flower also explained that she had a higher SES than her peers, which sometimes affected the way they interacted. She explained that while she was not actually close friends with one girl, she was "willing to be her friend" because she recognized the hardship she faced due to her SES. She said: "I know it can be hard. You know, to be surrounded by all these kids. And you know, every time you get a job…your little sister needs shoes or whatever. Like, you can't have it all of it yourself." Flower, and other young people thus interacted with their peers in a certain way based on their personal SES.

Indications of Socioeconomic Status. In order to determine the SES of their peers, young people in Greenville Cities said they used residential location as an indicator. Happy, for example, said that while she can't normally determine if someone was from Downtown Greenville, she can "sometimes tell if people are not from [Downtown Greenville], depending on how much money someone has…You assume they're from like [Suburb 1] not [Downtown

Greenville]." Other young people explained that they used style as a gauge of a peer's socioeconomic status.

Romollo explained how clothing style can be used as a tool to determine SES: "You can look at somebody, tell if they're fairly wealthy or not…Maybe like, their clothing…the cleanness of their clothes or how they smell." In addition to the condition of their clothing, the style in which they wear it was important for young people in making meaning of their peer's socioeconomic status and residential location. Allie, for example said: "You could just distinguish [the kids from Downtown Greenville] by like the way they dress, the way they talk, the way they act…the saggy pants it's horrible. It doesn't look good." Conversely, Turquoise explained that: "A lot of kids in [Suburb 1] are like preppy wear. So they wear like, pastel shorts, Sperry's and like probably like a collared shirt to like school." Caridad explained that she can not afford to dress in the same style as the rest of her suburban peers. This also created another source of difference and distance: "When it comes to fashion, I can't afford specific clothes either. I can't really buy makeup every month and do my hair. So like, people look at me like I'm crazy when I come in with sweatpants and t-shirts…It's okay." As expressed by these young people, they frequently had to navigate differences between themselves and their peers.

Young people in Greenville Cities expressed that they were consistently navigating differences of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. While this is to be expected in a school system experiencing a racial and ethnic integration reform, there was a variety of different experiences. Young people who attended magnet school, noted that they felt high levels of racial and ethnic diversity, which led to an accepting community with opportunities for cross cultural learning. While some young people of color who attended predominantly White schools felt accepted in their school communities, this was not the case for all. Other young people dealt with

cultural appropriation, judgments concerning appearance and language, and the stigmatization of their home community of Downtown Greenville.

Good Kids, Bad Kids: Making Meaning

While trying to navigate differences of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, young people in Greenville Cities often engaged a 'good kid, bad kid' binary to make meaning of their social and academic worlds. While the young people in this sample considered themselves the good kids, this did not translate to their neighborhood peers. This binary manifested through the stigmatization of Downtown Greenville, the politics of responsibility, and the warping of privilege and merit.

Stigmatizing Downtown Greenville. While 17 out of the 20 young people in this subsample primarily reside in Downtown Greenville, all young people were aware of the stigmatization of the neighborhoods and the schools in Downtown Greenville. Often, this stigma was internalized by the young people. One way this was expressed was through comparison. Devon, for example, explained: "[Suburb 2] is like, I guess you could say, nicer? And [Downtown Greenville], I'm not saying it's bad, but obviously like the people from there are like a little different." Similarly, Turquoise explained: "In [Suburb 1] you feel a lot safer 'cuz you don't expect much to go on. In [Downtown Greenville] you have to be careful where you walk. Like I'm comfortable walking around my neighborhood, um but do I do it? Naw. I don't do it."

Turquoise went on to explain that because he feels this way about his own neighborhood community, he often doesn't invite his friends from Suburb 1 to visit his house. He said: "I have friends come over like here and there, but other than that I don't have a large group of people over my house. I probably had two people come to my house in the past like month." When asked why he had invited few friends over, he explained: "You don't want your friends to see

what's going on in [Downtown Greenville]. So you just have to like kinda be careful of that." In addition to the stigma of Downtown Greenville neighborhoods, young people also reflected that there was a stigma against the community schools.

Sweetheart explained this sentiment, "I mean [Downtown Greenville] is not bad, bad. I mean the education is not as good as in [the suburbs] but it's not bad. I think it's on whether the student wants to learn or not." Many young people agreed that they wouldn't want to attend a Downtown Greenville community school. Basketball, wistfully explained: "I only went to [a Downtown Greenville high school] 'cuz I didn't have a choice…People don't really like public schools like that… it's like a last resort." Allie, similarly explained how she didn't want to attend any of the three most stigmatized high schools in Downtown Greenville: "One was full, and the other, there's a lot of drama I didn't want to be a part of. Rather stay away and mind my business in my own little school." While Allie most recently attended a community school in Downtown Greenville, it is characterized as a 'public academy' and therefore allows for students from outside the community to attend and has a specialized curriculum like a magnet school. This provides a certain protection from the stigma associated with Downtown Greenville community schools.

Turquoise also explained that he wouldn't want to attend a Downtown Greenville community high school: "There's some schools I definitely would not want to attend…I hear about swearing at teachers…like fighting one another…that doesn't happen in [Suburb 1]." Like Turquoise, Flower also attended schools in the suburbs and offered a similar opinion on Downtown Greenville community schools. Instead of explaining that the students were the cause for the school climate, she hints that it might be a more abstract city authority. She said: "I feel like [Downtown Greenville] doesn't care anymore. I honestly do…Kids out here bringing knives

on the bus…but they're still walking the stage [at graduation]. I'm confused." Not all young people, like Flower, pointed out that an external authority might be to blame for differences in educational quality. Instead, many of the young people held their peers accountable.

The Politics of Respectability. Young people of color in Greenville Cities often engaged the politics of respectability in order to make meaning of their own social and academic positionality. These young people sometimes used the majoritarian discourse to police the behavior of their peers. Spiderman explained that this is a way to gain support from a wide variety of people: "If you present yourself as a kid who's respectful, who is happy, who doesn't always wanna like irk on other kids, then, I think you'll have your fellow students, fellow anybody, mostly, supporting you or on your side with it." All of the young people in this subsample considered themselves to be good, and respectable, but didn't necessarily believe that was true for their peers. *Especially* their peers at community schools in Downtown Greenville.

Many of the young people explained that their school communities were full of 'good' kids. Spiderman, reflecting on his magnet elementary school in Downtown Greenville, said: "It had more kids who cared about each other, it had kids that like bring smiles to your faces. Like they make you happy." Happy, speaking of her magnet high school in Downtown Greenville, similarly relayed: "There's only like three [security guards]. 'Cuz our school is, like a more well behaved school, I guess." In addition to magnet schools being a place for good kids, Romollo also considered private schools to be extremely respectable places.

Romollo relayed this sentiment when explaining his decision to attend a suburban private school instead of his Downtown Greenville community school. He reflected: "It was like, either stay here and be around negative people and not learn much, or be around positive people that can help you, teach you and be around a positive environment." Romollo explained further what

he saw as the differences between the Downtown Greenville community school and the private

suburban school he attended was: "The level of respect overall, level of respect of the school, of

teachers, for each other. They just showed that they cared…over there, it's like, everybody

cares." He explained specifically, that he didn't feel this level of respect in his Downtown

Greenville peers:

> Some of my friends, they aren't really open minded to trying new things. But at
> this [private] school anybody is open-minded…no matter what race. I feel like,
> not be against my race, but I feel like at these schools, where its mostly Black
> kids, they're basically kind of racist. I felt like if they went to schools, they
> wouldn't give other kids chances. Because they're not really open-minded like the
> kids that are here. They're really open-minded [due to] the way that they've been
> taught or raised.

Like Romollo, many other young people expressed that differences in the way and the

environment in which they were raised made them more respectable than their peers. Sweetheart,

for example used language as an indicator for this sentiment. She said: "I'm more polite, and I

don't use the slang that they use. They'll say, 'Yo', what up?!' and I'm more like, 'Hi, how are

you?' Like I can't talk like that. I feel weird." Similarly, Flower explained that it was just the

overall way in which one presents themselves: "I talked to a guy who went to a private all-boys

school who presented himself with such class. I'm surrounded by all these [Downtown

Greenville] public boys… like you make your school sound disgusting by the way you present

yourself." Other factors also influenced young people to engage the good kid/bad kid binary.

   In addition to their openness, use of language, and general presentation, Allie also said

that the way young people choose to spend their time is also an indicator of if they are a good

kid, or a bad kid. While Allie most recently attended a community school in Downtown

Greenville, she still engaged a good kid/bad kid binary to separate herself from her peers. She

said: "The teenagers from [Downtown Greenville] are all about drugs, going out to party…that's

not fun. To me fun is, like let's play like laser tag. Let's go car racing. Let's go paintball. Like, that's fun to me." In addition to differences of behavior, entire schools were stigmatized as being full of bad kids.

Spiderman explained that he thought community schools, in general, were full of negativity: "There's so many problems in schools that are based on like kids in one area." One school, which was continually stigmatized as being a bad school, was Ralph's school.[21] While frequently mentioned by the young people in this subsample, Caridad, a Latina Girl, from Downtown Greenville generally explained:

> [The Downtown Greenville community high school] used to be so good back in the day. But now it just turned really bad. My sister used to go there. She got pregnant there, so, it's not a good place…They don't really care. I feel like kids are not really being educated…And it's also like, full of like Puerto Ricans and African Americans…It's not really diverse. And Puerto Ricans they're all very influenced by certain things. Especially the majority of them, which is not good things, so it ends up being not a good school. And I know the people in the school are really nice, but they're just not really into education.

Caridad employs the politics of respectability to police the behavior of her neighborhood peers and categorizes her peers of her own ethnicity as being "very influenced by [bad] things." It is important to note, that Caridad identified as Puerto Rican and also that if she did not attend a choice school, she would have attend this school as it is for young people in her district.

Doritos, attended a stigmatized community school when he was younger. Even though this school was in West Greenville, a predominately and wealthy town (see Table 2), it served a neighborhood primarily of color:

> To this day, the kids from [my community elementary school in West Greenville] are always like discriminated…they'd talk down to us, 'cuz what they heard from what they were told since they were little was that 'all bad kids go to there.' That was one of the things I struggled with when I went to [middle school] and everyone knew each other and was asking like, the new kids what elementary school they went to…it was almost like instant fear. At first, I felt like I didn't

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[21] See Table 6 for socio-demographic features of Ralph's school.

really understand what was going on. Then I told my mom about it and she
explained it to me. You know, different social classes and different
neighborhoods, and how people act and how people react to what they hear and to
what they see. So then when I started to get it, I just worked around it, and like,
did my best to make sure I didn't act like what they thought I was. Really we were
just like them, just with more issues.

In this passage, Doritos concludes by highlighting the similarity between him and his peers
despite their differences in residential location or SES, expressing awareness of systemic
inequality. Not all young people, however, expressed complete awareness of the larger
institutions influencing their social and academic positionality.

Privilege or Merit? As previously outlined, acceptance to choice schools is determined
by a lottery which takes into account race and ethnicity, as well as SES. In order to be accepted
into a Greenville Cities' magnet, charter, technical, agricultural, or open-choice school students
must enter a lottery, there is *no* test of merit. Acceptance is not determined by student's academic
standing or achievements. Some young people's narratives, however, indicate something
different, as many consider themselves to be somehow better than their peers in community
schools.

Devon, who most recently attended a magnet school in Suburb 2, stated: "Magnet school
[students], they're just brighter." Smith, who most recently attended a magnet school in East
Greenville explains that young people outside of his school community also hold this opinion:
"We get teased, like 'Oh! You're so smart. Oh duhduhduhduhduh.' I don't really care though.
I'm in a better position than them." He continued to explain that he also considers his school
peers to be superior to those in his neighborhood because they seem to express more care for
their academic work: "They don't really care over there. And that's kinda different from our
school, 'cuz like you have to care…I'd rather go to this school than my district school… the
students there are rude and ghetto." Smith was not the only young person to hold this opinion.

Turquoise offered similar commentary about young people who attend Downtown Greenville community schools: "I don't think I would be as focused on school. I know kids from [Downtown Greenville] who are smart and stuff, but like you don't see a lot of them." Perhaps this is because as Allie believes, "Public schools, they suck. It's just, the kids don't listen as much." Basketball, explained that these schools are poor quality, because they don't have a lottery acceptance program. He explained: "[Downtown Greenville community schools] are like bad schools 'cuz like they take anybody so like, it's not like a good place to go to school. [There's] a lot of violence there and stuff." Allie explained, that she believes students' behavior constitutes a reason for a lower quality of education: "You get what you deserve [in Downtown Greenville]. Like if you don't behave and listen to the teachers, why would you think they'll go out their way to help you." This opinion was not held by all of the young people in this subsample.

Other young people explained that Downtown Greenville community schools were not negative spaces. Spiderman, for example, expressed: "Like there are some kids, teenagers that go to [Downtown Greenville community high school]. They're totally fine. They had friends there. So it's just, your perspective and your experience with schools you've been through." Like Spiderman, other young people expressed how perspective and privilege created differences in experience and school quality.

Flower, for example, implied her own privilege compared to her past school peers at a 'low quality' charter school in Downtown Greenville. She said, "I see the kids that still go [to a charter school in Downtown Greenville]. They're not put together. I'm just like, 'I'm so sorry for you, I'm sorry you had to stay there.' Meanwhile I'm in a good school." Similarly, Basketball acknowledged the privilege he had by attending a suburban open-choice school with more

financial resources: "I think the kids in [Suburb 1] have more potential since they're wealthier.

So I guess they can pay for a good education you can say. Like the teachers are the best around."

Finally, Jerimih, who said he was "blessed" to be able to attend a magnet school, noted that he

had been extremely academically privileged compared to his neighbors. At that this was resultant

due to the luck of the draw. He said: "Once I got really emotional, because I realized going to

college and going to the school I went to is not a privilege everyone has…you know, there are

people on my street who probably won't go to college." As discussed, the reform interacted with

young peoples' peer cultures and friendships in racialized contexts, affecting their daily lives. In

turn, many young people had clear opinions on the racial and ethnic integration reform.

Hearing Young Peoples' Voices on the Racial and Ethnic Integration Reform

Expressed above is young people's experience and lived realities in the racial and ethnic

school integration reform. These young people did not only passively experience the policy

reform and consequent peer effects. Instead, they actively searched to make meaning and

constantly evaluated the system they were participating in. Many young people, overall, felt

positively about the racial and ethnic integration reform. Some young people highlighted they

liked the system because it gave them more agency to choose the community they wanted to be

in, and study the things they wanted to. Doritos explained that this was his opinion: "If kids want

to have the opportunity to go to a different school, outside of their borders, then I think they

should. Or if they wanna learn a certain trade, like technical schools, I think they should be able

to." Young people also explained that they supported the reform because it allowed them to

have access to a higher quality of education.

Spiderman expressed his support of the reform: "Now you have kids from [Downtown

Greenville] going into different schools, going into different places that they know the learning is

better for them. They're going to places where you could have a better experience, meet different

people." Happy, similarly stated: "I guess it's good you get to have a choice where you're gonna

go instead of just being put into the public school nearest to you. I know that certain public

schools are much worse than others. [Downtown Greenville] especially." Zander noted that not

only did the system allow for access to a higher quality of education, but it also redistributed

resources: "The point is to give us equal education, because in the suburbs, with the tax dollars,

there's richer people…[This] means more money to schools." Not all young people, however,

agreed with the racial and ethnic integration reform.

For some young people, the specialized curriculum associated with choice schools was

not appealing, and sometimes even limiting. Caridad, who most recently attended an agricultural

program housed in an open-choice suburban school, explained that she really didn't like

specialized curriculum at her district community school in Downtown Greenville. She said:

> I hate the specialization…you can only have certain choices, which is like a
> nursing, law, and this other academy. Like, if I'm going to a public school, I don't
> want to have to choose 'cuz I probably don't want to go to none of them and I
> don't want to do all this special classes for something I probably don't want to go
> into.

Specialized curriculum was not the only problem young people saw in the racial and ethnic

integration reform. Zander, also pointed out that having young people of color attend

predominantly White suburban schools, was not a good idea as they currently have no

curriculum to address privilege or racism. She said: "Until we can teach children to not judge

other children based on their skin tone or where they're from, you're gunna have kids like me,

who go to these other districts, and find it difficult to shift." Young people in this subsample also

suggested other solutions.

In addition to educating students on privilege and racism, Caridad explained that having more White, suburban students in Downtown Greenville community schools might be beneficial. She said: "If you have more people from suburban towns coming into urban schools, it kind of makes it more diverse and then people are more open-minded…You get what I'm trying to say? You have to mix it for people to open their minds." Caridad and Zander both expressed that the racial and ethnic integration reform is falling short of its goals. Downtown Greenville and suburban schools are still hyper-segregated in terms of race and ethnicity as well as resources. Until this is accounted for, they explain, we will continue to see negative and difficult peer effects.

Discussion

To conclude, the contributions to the literature, limitations and future research, and policy recommendations will be discussed.

Contributions to the Literature

This paper makes contributions to the literature by offering an exploration on how young people of color conceptualize friendship and navigate their racial and ethnic identities in a variety of peer contexts during a racial and ethnic integration reform.

Young People of Color and Friendship. As expressed in the literature, most positivist research on adolescent friendships has been with predominately White, middle-class young people. The literature indicates that friendship is important because it is related to happiness, social anxiety, behavioral choices, academic achievement, and overall well-being (Demir, Özen, & Dogan, 2012; Crosnoe & Needham, 2004; Siegel, la Greca & Harrison, 2009; Witkow & Fuligni, 2010). This paper presses the current literature forward, in that it qualitatively asks young people of color about their notions and experiences with friendships. Specifically, this

paper engaged young people with the question: "when you hear the word friendship, what do you think of?"

Their answers revealed complex and nuanced definitions they created through their personal experiences with their peers. The findings suggest that for young people of color, friendships are conceptualized on a scale of closeness, with their placement depending on the strength of their bond. While it was often related to a shared history, or shared schooling, friendship operated outside of this context as well. Young people were more focused on the strength and durability of their bonds. Friendship, they suggested is something that needs to be continually demonstrated. They also explained that there are certain qualities which make some individuals better friends than others. Additionally, as we know race and ethnicity are significant in the structure of adolescents' social worlds and friendships (Rude & Herda, 2010). This was certainly true for these young people, as their friendships were shaped by systems of inequality, specifically with consideration to race and ethnicity.

The literature suggests that the closeness and successfulness of interracial friendships differs depending on context (McGill, Way, & Hughes, 2012; Rude and Herda, 2010; Yip, Seaton, Sellers, 2010). This was indicated by the findings, as young people who attended magnet schools expressed that their schools had racial, ethnic, and SES diversity, which allowed for an easy transition. Those who went to predominantly White schools, however, were more likely to have difficult transitions. Unique to this paper, however, is about how an individuals' racial and ethnic identity can shift depending on the context. Specifically, Latina girls in this sub-sample explained the frequency in which they had to navigate their racial and ethnic identities in shifting contexts and environments. In communities, peers policed their bodies and language. Yet, in

more diverse geographical locations or schools, Latinas who self-identified as being light-skinned were often considered to be White.

Young people of color also policed each other's mannerisms, behaviors and language by employing the politics of respectability and creating and maintaining a 'good kid/bad kid' binary. This often happened when young people gained access to academic privilege through the lottery system, and were able to attend choice schools including magnet, suburban open-choice, agricultural, and technical. Often times, those with academic privilege confused their position at a choice school with merit, and in turn, considered themselves to be smarter than their peers. Young people also used language, behaviors, and personal style as a way to mark neighborhood peers as 'bad kids.' Not all of the young people in this sub-sample made meaning in this way. Some, like Doritos had been on the 'bad kid' side of the binary, and understood the complexities of systemic inequalities causing the stigmatization of his school. Others, like Jerimih, contemplated and expressed the innate privilege one has by being able to attend a choice school. In addition to making contributions to the literature on young people of color and friendship, this paper also begins to fill a large gap in the literature on school choice policies and racial and ethnic integration reforms by including the ways in which young people make meaning of the impact these school choice policies have on their lives and friendships/interpersonal relationships.

Racial and Ethnic Integration and Daily Lives. The literature on racial and ethnic integration examines the effects on communities and individuals. The literature shows that an integrated schooling experience leads to improved test scores for young people of color (Angrist & Lang, 2004; Bifulco, Cobb, & Bell, 2009; Weiss & Baker-Smith). Furthermore, the literature also indicates that reduced isolation in? schools can actually have isolating effects on

surrounding communities (Archabald, 2004; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006; Wanzer, Moore and Dougherty, 2008). The literature, however, does not discuss the way that the integrated school experience, or the reforms producing in this experience, effects the daily lives of young people of color. In the findings, this exact gap is addressed.

School mobility, as influenced by the adult dominated lottery experience, was a common experience for the young people of Greenville Cities. This often put their friendships and peer cultures in transition. Those who transitioned into magnet schools, other schools with diverse student bodies, or with community peers, had an easier and happier transition than those who didn't. Young people of color who transitioned to predominantly White suburban community schools, often had a difficult time making friends. However, this was dependent on age, and level of assimilation. Those who transitioned while they were younger, like Turquoise, often had an easier time. For some, like Romollo, the transition back to Downtown Greenville schools was more difficult, as he had already assimilated to his predominantly White school.

Institutionalized, cultural, and personal racism were also prominent in the daily lives of these young people. Adults, institutions, and peers all were perpetrators of racist comments, especially within predominately communities. In addition to race and ethnicity, young people also had to navigate differences in socioeconomic status. Sometimes, like for Allie, these experiences were aggressive and patronizing. For others, like Caridad, these experiences weren't marked by aggression, but still distanced her from her community peers. For young people in Greenville Cities, distance from school was also a significant factor that influenced their daily lives. As many choice schools were outside of their home communities, some young people traveled a long distance to school (see Table 7). As expressed in the findings, this had real effects

on their friends and their daily lives. It influenced, when, how, and where they interacted with

their friends, as well as how much time they could dedicate to other things in their lives.

Limitations and Future Research

While this paper makes contributions to both the school choice and friendship literature,

it has limitations. Firstly, as expressed in the literature, gender is an extremely important factor in

understanding friendship choices, durability, and closeness. Therefore, future research should

focus more on gender, and understanding the complexities and nuances in same-gender and

different-gender friendships for young people of color. This should be addressed with a similar

participant-driven, qualitative approach, as it is lacking in the friendship literature. Additionally,

specificity of race, ethnicity, and culture should also be more closely considered. This paper

examined friendships with young people of color, however, differences in individual race or

ethnic groups were not examined. Similarly, future researchers should aim to accurately measure

young peoples' SES to determine if it affects friendship choices or conflict.

Furthermore, similar questions should be examined with a *larger* sample. Although

trends and patterns emerged from these twenty interviews, it would be worthwhile to see if they

continued to hold. Specifically, it would be interesting to see if the findings regarding friendships

held in different school types and geographies. As mentioned in the Methods section, a

comparative analysis was not performed due to the small sample size and high levels of school

variation. If future researchers engaged these questions with a larger sample, comparisons could

be made across school types and geographies, which would enrich the findings. Similarly, while

it is a strength that this sample of 20 young people attended 18 different schools, it would be

interesting to look at friendship and peer culture dynamics within a smaller community (see

Table 6). For example, an examination of friendship experiences within a racial and ethnic

integration reform could be studied in the future within a single school, grade, or geographical location.

Future researchers should also examine if other young people employ the 'good kid/bad kid' binary in order to make sense of their social worlds in other metropolitan areas experiencing a racial and ethnic integration reform. Again, it would be interesting to explore this finding in different contexts and school types. Furthermore, another limitation of this paper is that none of the young people currently attend a private or charter school. As discussed through the narratives of young people in the findings, however, it is possible to believe that a similar dynamic would occur in these other 'choice' schools.

Additionally, while adults' authority in the school selection process is covered in the findings, it is only through the perspective of young people. As this is a limitation, future researchers should engage this questions with adults such as parents, teachers, school administrators, and policy makers. These perspectives, in combination with the perspectives of young people, would create a rich basis of knowledge that could potentially inform social and educational policies. Finally, while this piece contributes to the sociological research on friendship, as requested by Eve (2002) and Pahl (2002) there is still much to be studied. Future sociologists should consider the concept of friendship to be a worthy focus of study, and a phenomenon with sociological consequences.

Policy Recommendations

Above all else, federal, state, and local governments as well as policy makers should aim to have access to a high quality of education for all students. While racial and ethnic integration reforms do make small corrections to this systemic unbalance, they are having their own consequences on the friendships and peer cultures of young people. In turn, it is important to take

this factor into account. Firstly, all schools should aim to address *privilege* and emphasis

diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, and SES as do the magnet schools in Greenville Cities.

Community members, including teachers and community members should make this

commitment, and should aim to make schools inclusive and welcoming places for all students.

Diversity in practice and in knowledge should be incorporated into all institutions of learning, as

well as in curriculum. As expressed in the findings, this leads to a more inclusive environment

for students, and happier experiences with friends and peer cultures. Furthermore, privilege must

be acknowledged in all aspects of educational policy creation and in-school practices. At the

school level, adult authorities must be aware of how privilege plays out in the classroom,

affecting the daily lives of young people of color.

Moving forward, policy makers should aim to secure quality education for all students,

while not harmfully disrupting their daily lives. As expressed in the findings, Greenville's school

integration policies have some negative outcomes for young people, including increased mobility

and racist interactions. These negative experiences should be minimized as much as possible.

One way to do this, is to focus more on the experiences of young people, rather than abstractions

like test scores. Young peoples' lives, voices, opinions, and well-being should all be considered.

Academic achievement can not be the only important variable when making policy; social

worlds, peer cultures, and friendships should also be considered, as these provide young people

happiness and meaning to life. Finally, policy makers, parents, and teachers should minimize

adultist practices and instead be considerate of the way in which school integration policies

influence young people's daily lives.

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Authors' Credentials and Background

It is important that I acknowledge my positionality. I am the granddaughter of a World War Two veteran who benefited from the G.I. Bill and was able to achieve a PhD and significant wealth, certainly partially due to his privilege of being a White, heterosexual, military man. Raised in the Great Depression, he remained frugal until the day he died. As a widower he would go to three different supermarkets to obtain the best prices and when the snow melted each year, he went for morning walks to pick up the coins that had fallen into the snow that no one had bothered to search for. All of this is to say, the only thing my grandfather felt entirely comfortable spending his money on was education.

The "rural fringe" school district I was born into never would have landed me at Connecticut College. According to US News, the students scored a 19.8 on the College Readiness Index, which is much lower than the neighboring districts. My district lacked sound financial planning. Students had amazing facilities, but these were deeply under-resourced. My older brother had been a student of the school system and was in no way supported or taught; instead, he was humiliated and constantly disciplined. He dropped out his sophomore year of high school.

In turn, my grandfather decided to personally finance my education. I started private school in third grade and continued all the way through high school. Although I was within driving distance of nationally ranked private prep schools, my family decided to place me in very small, progressive, 'hippy' schools. I was taught to explore my world creatively and never be shy to question. That being said, my education was certainly limited in many ways. First, my schools were incredibly homogenous. There was very little racial or socio-economic diversity among the students, teachers or administrators, and most of the non-students were highly privileged international students, indicating severe residential segregation. However, I do not think this particular aspect would have been different had I attended my district school, as it is also in a very homogenous community. Furthermore, there was the issue of distance. From seventh through twelfth grade, I spent two hours a day on the road to get to school. I traveled nearly 50 miles each way and often was away from home for more than 12 hours a day.

My friendships were a function of the school choices made by my family. They chose to take me out of my district school, thus completely altering my social world. All of my friends lived far away, some of them even across state borders. On weekends, my parents would drive me up to an hour away so I could socialize with friends. I did not interacted with any of my neighbors. My home community was isolating. I did not know any teenagers my age in my town because I had not been in school or programs with any of them since I was 8 years old. I was seen as an outsider to the dominant teen 'hick' culture in my town. Instead, I identified with the culture of the schools I attended, rather than the community I lived in. I was comfortable and happy interacting with children of hippies and yuppies in a highly educated, very liberal, resourced environment. Even as adults, my brother and I inhabit incredibly different social worlds, which were each deeply influenced by our school communities.

The choice my family made concerning where I went to school was only possible due to financial resources and inherited privilege. My social, educational, and professional worlds are thus, a *consequence of choice*. Yet I realize that this type of choice is only limited to a tiny privileged portion of our population. I am interested in other consequences of choice—especially when these choices are involuntary and are being driven by outside agents such as politicians,

policy makers, school boards, and perhaps parents. I also want to explore the results of these 'choices' in an urban metropolitan area. Therefore, while extremely removed, I am personally connected to this question of the consequences of choice. Furthermore, I am devoted to the goal of the participants' voices being heard, as voices like mine have been systemically and historically privileged.

      Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role my positionality as a White, 21 year-old, college-educated, middle-class woman played in the interview room and data analysis process. It is evident in the interviews that the way in which the young people of color interacted with me was different than with the other members of the research team. For example, in one interview not included in this subsample, a participant exclaimed, obviously for my benefit, "I love people!" despite the fact that she didn't want to attend a majority private school. While we tried to minimize existing power dynamics maintained by adultism, there is no guarantee that my age and position as a college researcher did not influence the responses in the interview room. Additionally, as I was the only individual involved in data analysis, it is with certainty that the interviews were coded with personal bias that was informed by my own socio-educational history and positionality.

Tables

Table 6. *Participants' School's Detailed Socio-Demographic Features*

Young peoples' individual school's socio-demographics	*Enrollment*	Race and Ethnicity					Gender			Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible	
		Asian	*Black/African American*	*Latino/a*	*Multiracial/ ethnic*	*White*	*Other*	*Male*	*Female*	*Free lunch*	*Reduced price lunch*
Downtown Community											
Allie	343	2.6%	49.3%	39.7%	6.4%	2.0%	0.0%	51.3%	48.7%	72.3%	48.7%
Ralph [e]	458	2.6%	35.4%	55.0%	3.5%	3.3%	0.2%	28.8%	71.2%	99.3%	0.0%
Zander	492	0.2%	67.5%	28.5%	2.8%	1.0%	0.0%	47.2%	52.8%	99.4%	0.0%
Downtown Magnet											
Ezekiel	189	5.3%	12.7%	44.4%	1.6%	19.6%	0.5%	51.3%	48.7%	51.9%	11.1%
Happy	690	2.5%	40.9%	27.4%	5.2%	24.1%	0.0%	43.8%	56.2%	37.8%	8.4%
Purple	596	4.7%	10.4%	53.5%	2.5%	28.7%	0.2%	57.2%	42.8%	99.5%	0.0%
Downtown Technical											
Jaclyn	801	0.7%	31.3%	57.4%	1.5%	8.9%	0.1%	46.7%	53.3%	65.0%	8.0%
East Magnet											
Erica	392	1.8%	26.5%	38.3%	8.4%	25.0%	0.0%	42.9%	57.1%	30.1%	10.7%
Jerimih, Romollo, and Smith	197	12.2%	36.5%	17.3%	0.5%	32.5%	1.0%	37.1%	62.9%	21.3%	10.2%
West Community											
Doritos	1502	11.9%	10.9%	18.2%	2.1%	56.9%	0.1%	50.7%	49.3%	19.8%	5.8%
Suburban Community											
Flower (sub8)	523	6.5%	9.9%	8.4%	1.1%	73.2%	0.8%	56.2%	43.8%	25.8%	8.2%
Molly (sub7)	1141	3.9%	51.0%	13.6%	2.8%	28.7%	0.1%	53.5%	46.5%	23.3%	9.3%
Sweetheart (sub6)	722	1.9%	5.5%	10.9%	3.7%	77.7%	0.1%	50.6%	49.4%	15.7%	6.9%
Turquoise (sub1)	1057	9.0%	3.5%	5.6%	2.8%	79.0%	0.1%	47.8%	52.2%	4.7%	2.1%
Suburban Magnet											
Basketball (sub5)	360	7.8%	34.4%	30.3%	3.3%	23.6%	0.6%	20.8%	79.2%	44.2%	13.9%
Devon (sub2)	722	4.2%	48.8%	16.8%	3.0%	26.7%	0.6%	44.2%	55.8%	24.1%	10.4%
Spiderman (sub3)	406	2.0%	27.8%	40.1%	2.7%	25.9%	1.5%	67.2%	32.8%	56.7%	11.1%
Suburban Agriculture[a]											
Caridad (sub4)	2140	9.7%	3.8%	7.2%	2.4%	76.7%	0.2%	47.7%	52.3%	7.0%	2.4%

Notes: Public school data 2013-2014, 2014-2015 school years, *Common Core of Data*, retrieved February 5th 2016, from received from https://nces.ed.gov/ccd on February 8th 2016; [a] these figures are representative of the suburban community school that hosts this agricultural program as data on the individual program was not available; [e] Ralph most recently attended a specialized public academy at a Downtown community school which focuses on nursing, the over-representation of girls at this school therefore might be explained by sex typing.

Table 7. *Participants' self-selected pseudonyms and socio-educational characteristics for 2014-2015*

Pseudonym	Age	Grade	Gender	Ethnicity	School Type	School Location	Residential Location	Distance Traveled to School
Allie	17	10	girl	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	community	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	0.9 mi
Basketball	15	10	boy	African American	magnet	Suburb 5	Downtown Greenville	11.6 mi
Caridad	17	10	girl	Latino/a	agricultural	Suburb 4	Downtown Greenville	9.9 mi
Devon	15	9	boy	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	magnet	Suburb 2	Suburb 7	4.2 mi
Doritos	16	11	boy	Latino/a	community	West Greenville	West Greenville and East Greenville	1.5 mi; 10.5 mi
Erica	17	11	girl	Jamaican American	magnet	East Greenville	Downtown Greenville	5.2 mi
Ezekiel	15	10	boy	African American	magnet	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	5.8 mi
Flower	16	11	girl	Jamaican American	community	Suburb 8	Downtown Greenville	12.2 mi
Happy	17	11	girl	White/Caucasian	magnet	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	3.1 mi
Jaclyn	15	10	girl	Latino/a	technical	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	0.2 mi
Jerimih	18	12	boy	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	magnet	East Greenville	Downtown Greenville	-- [a]
Molly	17	11	girl	Jamaican American	community	Suburb 7	Suburb 7	1.1 mi
Purple	15	8	girl	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	magnet	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	0.4 mi
Ralph	15	9	boy	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	community	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	0.4 mi
Romollo	15	8	boy	Multi-Racial/Ethnic	magnet	East Greenville	Downtown Greenville	13.3 mi
Smith	15	10	boy	African American	magnet	East Greenville	Downtown Greenville	8.3 mi
Spiderman	15	9	boy	Latino/a	magnet	Suburb 3	Downtown Greenville	18.5 mi
Sweetheart	17	11	girl	Latino/a	community	Suburb 6	Downtown Greenville	12.7 mi
Turquoise	15	9	boy	African American	community	Suburb 1	Downtown Greenville	13.2 mi
Zander	16	10	girl	Latino/a	magnet	Downtown Greenville	Downtown Greenville	-- [a]

Notes: In order to calculate distance traveled to school, participants' home and school addresses were entered into Google Maps; [a] two of the participants did not provide their home addresses during the interview, therefore this variable is not available.

Table 8. *Participants' educational history across school type and geographies*

Pseudonym	Downtown Greenville					East Greenville		West Greenville			Greenville Suburbs				Out of Town	Total # of schools attended:
	community	*magnet*	*charter*	*technical*	*private*	*community*	*magnet*	*community*	*magnet*	*private*	*community*	*magnet*	*Sub. private*	*agriculture*	*community*	
Allie	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	7
Basketball	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	4
Caridad	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	3
Devon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	2
Doritos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	4
Erica	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	3
Ezekiel	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Flower	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	5
Happy	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Jaclyn	X	X	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Jerimih	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	6
Molly	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	3
Purple	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Ralph	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Romollo	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	5
Smith	-	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Spiderman	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	3
Sweetheart	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	3
Turquoise	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	4
Zander	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	2 [a]

Notes: [a] Zander did not provide a full list of her past schools, these two are representative of the schools she discussed in her semi-structured interview.