5-2013

Desegregation in a "Color-Blind" Era: Parents Navigating School Assignment and Choice in Louisville, KY

Rebecca Page Johnson
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This dissertation is a qualitative study of how parents in Louisville, Kentucky navigate the marketplace of schools. The study focuses on how parents choose schools in a metropolitan area where the primary public school district, Jefferson County Public Schools, which was originally racially desegregated by court order, instituted an assignment plan that relies on a measure of race, income and education level in neighborhood clusters to assign students to schools. I argue that this assignment plan, although crafted to increase equity among students, is resisted by parental decision-making. Parents represent this resistance as “color-blind,” connected to the logistical and academic needs of their children. The study uses two levels of analysis: a policy analysis that examines the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment plan, and a critical analysis of how parents both understand the plan and use their cultural capital to reproduce their own social location through the school choice process.
DESEGREGATION IN A “COLOR-BLIND” ERA:
PARENTS NAVIGATING SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT AND CHOICE IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

By

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B.S. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1996
M.S. Cornell University, 2001

DISSERTATION
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
Syracuse University

May 2013
We shall never cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

-T.S. Eliot
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the participants in my study who opened their homes and hearts to me. Every single one of my participants demonstrated in their testimony, their love and dedication to their children and families. I was inspired by their stories. Although my study looks at broader social structures over which they have little control, I hope that they will understand that I heard them and recognize their commitment to and love for their children.

A dissertation is not possible without the support and guidance of academic mentors, family and friends. I have been blessed in my life to have all of these supports.

My advisor, Sari Biklen, has been a tremendous guide through this process. The coursework I have taken from her on qualitative methods and the countless meetings we have had challenged my thinking and pushed this dissertation to a deeper level. I am thankful to have a dissertation supervisor who is both wise and honest, who will ask the difficult questions and always push me to "make the subtext, the text."

The Cultural Foundations of Education department at Syracuse University has given me an amazingly supportive intellectual community. Gretchen Lopez, Emily Robertson, Barbara Applebaum, Mark Stern, Gerald Grant, and Elizabethe Payne have all influenced my thinking, introduced me to new ways of seeing and supported me in this journey. My peers in CFE have been instrumental in pushing my work forward and giving me the encouragement I need to continue. Yuan Zhang Dickerson, Josh Bornstein, Lauren Shallish, Ashley Taylor, Melissa Smith, Heidi Pitzer, Katherine Seiger, Carolyn Salter, Jermaine Soto and Afua Boahene, thank you for your support. I look forward to many years of conferencing together and sharing ideas. What a fabulous group of people! My thanks to CFE folks would not be complete without a thank you to Maryann Barker. I imagine her name appears in every dissertation in the department because she is the "keeper of the keys" and the sage friend who sets you back on the path when you start to move too far away. Thank you, Maryann for your hard work and kind words.

My work has been shaped by the many academic mentors I have had along the way at all of the institutions I have attended. Their words and ideas ring in my head as I write and research and they have become part of me. Ken Strike has pushed me to structure my arguments with logic and precision and enlightened me with historical context. George Theoharis was a wonderful addition to my committee, asking important questions with grace. Both Steve Kyle and Ritch Savin Williams have been excellent advisors and mentors in understanding academia.
When I look back to understand how I came to this place, I realize that my love for the potential of an academic life to spark the imagination and ultimately change the world came from my undergraduate years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My professors there took the Wisconsin Idea of "sifting and winnowing" seriously, and their passion for their subjects and students changed the way I viewed the world. My first year honors seminar with Craig Werner, my upper-level seminars with Herbert Hill and my coursework and advising from Mimi Orner inspired me and challenged me to keep questioning, discovering and sharing.

Of course, ultimately why we finish comes down to support from family. I have been blessed to have four parents who have each in their own way made this possible. I am so privileged to have had their support and assistance.

Mom and Bob you have given me so much support throughout this process. It could not have happened without both of you. Thank you both for instilling in me the value of hard work and perseverance. You are both such strong models for the value of tenacity. I am thankful to have you in my life.

Dad, I wish you could be here to see this and hold it in your hands. You always wanted to write a book so this is my gift to you. Thank you for always believing in me and loving me so completely. I miss you every day and can't seem to stop picking up the phone to call you. This work is as much yours as it is mine. I chose the topic to be near you and to give you something to focus on when your pain was so intense. I hope that while you were alive it gave you some comfort and focus. I so wish you could have lived to see the end of this process. Ellen, your generosity and guidance in researching this work and support and care for Dad are part of the great blessings of my life. Thank you for your time, your support and your thoughtful insight into the city of Louisville.

Kathleen and Elizabeth, you are my everything. I can't express in words how happy you make me.

Elizabeth, being your mom is the greatest gift in my life. You are part of this work. You were there with me for so much of the research and studying. You accompanied me on my tours of Louisville - and took many of the photos in this dissertation. The curiosity you have for research is a gift, and will bring you to a greater understanding of our world. I hope that in experiencing this process with me, you will have seen one path that a woman can take and that witnessing this will allow you to know that your future is limited only by the vision you have for yourself. Dream big, little one.
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Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

Since Brown v. Board of Education (1954) declared that separate schools are not equal, school districts have struggled with how to desegregate schools. Districts under court order have re-drawn school zones, consolidated districts, and bused students to achieve racially integrated schools; and beginning in the 1970’s, magnet schools utilized parental choice to attract white students to themed schools in urban areas. All of these methods of school assignment used the self-identified race of students for school placement. The Supreme Court further defined the role of school districts to desegregate in Milliken v. Bradley (1974) and through a number of court cases in the South in the 1980’s, when districts began to be released from desegregation orders (Grant, 2009; Lassiter, 2006). These moves away from active integration created racially homogenous schools and increasing segregation in areas that had been previously desegregated (Clotfelter et al, 2006; Orfield and Lee, 2006). Some large cities prioritized integration and continued to integrate schools through busing; however, the 2007 Supreme Court decision in the consolidated cases of Meredith v. Jefferson County and Parents Involved v. Seattle (2007), hereafter referred to as Meredith, declared these plans unconstitutional, thereby preventing school districts from using the race of an individual student for school assignment.

The defendant in the Meredith case, the Jefferson County School District, is a large metropolitan district of over 300 square miles in Louisville, KY. Its school assignment plan, which was instituted in 1975, used busing and magnet schools of choice to achieve racially balanced student populations (K’Meyer, 2010). The Meredith
decision forced Jefferson County to abandon its previous plan, and reconsider its goals for school assignment. Justice Kennedy’s separate opinion in Meredith (2007) stated that a policy that uses race in combination with other factors would pass his “narrowly tailored” test of constitutionality (Meredith, 2007; Hines, 2008). Citing a commitment to integrated schools and the third way sanctioned by Kennedy, Jefferson County adopted a new assignment plan in 2009-2010, which uses the average income, education level, and minority population of neighborhood zones to assign students to elementary schools (Jefferson County, 2010a; Jefferson County Public Schools 2010b). Choices for students in Jefferson County Public Schools include neighborhood schools, magnet schools, and traditional schools that require uniforms and strict academic requirements for homework and behavior. Louisville parents can also choose schools in the robust private school market, in geographically distant districts in outlying counties, in a small wealthy independent district within the borders of the county, or they can choose home-schooling.

As parents make decisions about school placement for their children, issues of race, class and geography come to the forefront. This dissertation, a case study of school assignment and choice in Louisville, examines how parents whose children attend or do not attend Jefferson County Public Schools choose elementary schools and make housing decisions to access education. It investigates how the flow of information, the content of talk, and the financial and social realities of families impact decisions about schooling and housing. This dissertation analyzes the decision-making of parents on two levels: a first level that examines the logistical aspects of decision-
making for parents that will affect how policy-makers design school assignment policies, and a second level that asks critical questions about how parents frame and articulate their decision-making process. This second level of analysis asks deeper questions about how parents code their talk about school choice, unearthing “color-blind” codes for decisions that reify racial and class hierarchies. It seeks to examine how parents’ surface decision-making process forms a sort of color-blind logic which simultaneously reproduces race and class privilege without resorting to socially unacceptable expressions of blatant racism.

Research Questions

Overall, this dissertation uncovers how parents reproduce and/or resist racial and class divisions in navigating a school assignment plan that purports to disrupt racial and class isolation and segregation. Specifically it asks: How do parents in Louisville, Jefferson County, choose schools for their children? How do parents look at housing decisions in the context of school choices? How do parents understand their choices in a historical context of busing and segregated schools?

Setting

Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky is considered a border or gateway city, partially because of its position in the U.S. Civil War as a city in an uncommitted state, which was a neutral headquarters for both the Union and Confederate Army (K’Meyer, 2009). For
the United States, Kentucky is considered politically moderate and has become a place where Southern artists, writers and actors come together. Metro Louisville covers over 300 square miles and has a population of around 700,000 people, 73% of whom are white, 21% African American, 3% Hispanic, and 2% Asian (US Census, 2010). As part of the Sunbelt portion of the United States, Louisville is growing not only in population, but also in diversity as many new immigrant groups are drawn to the new jobs and opportunities available in the growing business environment. Business groups and politicians have been successful in fostering a corporate environment by attracting national corporations. Louisville has been successful in attracting a number of headquarters or regional operations, including the worldwide air hub for UPS (United Parcel Service) and the headquarters for Yum Brands, Food, Inc, the world’s largest restaurant corporation, which includes KFC, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut. In addition, Papa John’s Pizza and Brown and Forman are Louisville companies that have an international distribution and presence. The headquarters of the Presbyterian Church, USA and health care companies such as Humana, Inc are also located in Louisville.

The corporate environment of Louisville interacts with the historical realities
of the city's location. The vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow cannot be ignored, as they are part of the very construction of the geography of Louisville and the United States entire. These constructions of the physical space of Louisville, in the construction of homes offered to white GI’s at the end of World War II in the white east end, in the construction of highways that eased the transition to white suburbs, the history of race and space is impossible to ignore. The secondary story of how the Civil Rights Movement was taken up by Louisvillians like Anne Braden,¹ as well as how desegregation policies through the court enforcement of Brown v. Board in the 1950's and 1970's construct space as well. These histories of busing and desegregation were present in almost every native Louisvillian’s narrative and are present in the construction of the new assignment plan and the public debate on its merits. To understand how parents choose schools in Louisville, it is important to first consider the histories of desegregation in Louisville schools.

**Histories of School Desegregation in Louisville**

"Senator, I hope and I know that the principles of Brown v. Board are still relevant today. The idea of equality under law is a fundamental American Constitutional value."

-Elena Kagan 2010 Supreme Court Confirmation Hearings

In the South, where in 1954, 100% of black students attended schools that were 90 - 100% black, the Supreme Court decision, Brown v. Board of Education had a

---

¹ Anne Braden was a white Civil Rights Activist and native of Louisville who in 1954 purchased a home on behalf of an African American family in an all-white neighborhood to integrate housing in Louisville. Anne's activism in the Civil Rights Movement was lauded in Martin Luther King’s, Letter from a Birmingham Jail.
particularly profound effect. By 1972 only 25% of black students in the South attended schools that were 90-100% black (Clotfelter, 2006). Policy-makers credit not only Brown for this integration of schools, but the many district-wide policies that bused students to achieve integration across racial neighborhood divides, and the federal oversight of districts that ensured that schools were abiding by the tenants of Brown.

Jefferson County School District has been designing race-conscious school assignment policies for over one hundred years. The first desegregation of schools occurred in 1954, when Brown v. Board, trumped the Day Law, a 1904 Kentucky state law prohibiting whites and blacks from being educated in the same school (Carmichael, 1957). When, in the early 1970’s, schools became segregated again through housing shifts, The Kentucky Civil Liberties Union, Legal Aid Society and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People filed suit to gain the right to integrate schools (Courier Journal, 2005). Ultimately, the 6th circuit court of appeals ruled that the district must desegregate by busing students across district lines. The Louisville City district was dissolved by action of the school board, and the default, outlying Jefferson County district took over the education of the residents of the city by establishing a metropolitan school system and a merged school board comprising members of the former county and city school boards (K’Meyer, 2009). The Jefferson County School District implemented a desegregation plan using busing that was mandated by order of the federal district court. The appellate court oversaw the details of the busing plan and was strict about racial quotas in schools and the inclusion of all grades of students in the plan. The original desegregation plan bused white students two out of twelve years of
schooling to schools that were in the downtown or West End and were formerly primarily black. African American students were bused ten out of twelve years of schooling to schools in the suburbs that were majority white. The goal of the appellate court was for all schools in Louisville to maintain an enrollment that was at least 15% African American and no more than 50%. At that time students were classified as black and nonblack; Asian, Native and Hispanic Americans were placed in the nonblack category. In the 1980’s the desegregation plan changed so that students could continue to attend one school for the duration of the grades covered by that school, so students who began their elementary school career could continue in that elementary school until they moved on to middle school. Over the years, this plan was modified in various ways, but the central racial guidelines persisted: a target of 15 % to 50% African-American students in each school building.

In the late 1970’s, the Jefferson County School District augmented its plan by developing a number of magnet schools in the downtown and West End with specialty programs to attract white suburban families to the city schools to help maintain their racial guidelines. One magnet program, The Traditional School Program, focused on basic skills, discipline, dress codes, and values such as patriotism, courtesy, and respect for others. The traditional programs had high expectations for parental involvement and homework and made parents agree to their strict requirements before enrolling their children. Because the traditional magnets are offered at the elementary, middle and high school levels, a type of feeder program developed by which traditional middle school magnets gave preferential treatment to students who attended traditional
elementary schools and traditional high school magnets gave preferential admissions
treatment to students who had attended traditional middle school magnets. This
preferential admissions treatment encouraged parents to enroll their children in
traditional schools located in the city or inner ring suburbs starting in elementary school
in order to "guarantee" a spot in the competitive Traditional High Schools. One of my
interview participants said of this system, "I know when I am choosing an elementary
school, I am really choosing where my child goes to high school. I am making all of
those decisions with this one choice" (Kagan). Because of the high demand for the
selective magnet high schools, the school district was able to gain investment from
suburban middle class parents in the elementary years to the magnet schools that were
located in the downtown business district or in low-income, high-minority
neighborhoods in the West End of Louisville.

The Jefferson County School District magnet programs also included specialties
such as math, science and technology schools, Montessori schools, Waldorf-inspired
schools, a gifted and talented program, and performing arts schools. The magnet
schools relied on alumni connections, renovated and highly technologically advanced
school buildings, and active marketing to draw students to schools in the downtown and
western side of the city. These magnet schools, in combination with the plan’s
requirement that all schools have no more than 50% and no less than 15% African-
American students, allowed Jefferson County to maintain desegregated schools when
other districts were resegregating. In the 2003-2004 school year, Jefferson County
schools were 42.6% nonwhite; however, no black students in Jefferson County attended
schools that were 90-100% non-white (Clotfelter et al., 2006). This lack of racial isolation contrasts substantially with the situation in other Border States: 42% of black students in Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia attended schools that were 90-100% minority in the 2003-2004 school year, while no black student in Jefferson County attended a school that was 90-100% minority in that year (Orfield and Lee, 2006). Historically, the Jefferson County School district has been able to maintain a high level of racial integration through the strategic use of its assignment plan and magnet school program.

However, the popularity of the magnet schools made them a target for court action by parents who were dissatisfied with their lack of access to the schools. One such court case released Louisville from court oversight. Unitary status was granted to the Louisville-Jefferson County school district after African-American parents sued the school district because their children were denied admission to Central High School (previously, the traditional black high school prior to Brown v. Board) based upon their race. The school district, in holding to its desegregation decree that no school maintain an enrollment of over 50% African Americans, denied admission to black students because the 50% threshold had already been reached (Moorman, 2001, p. 1). Hampton v. Jefferson County (2000) stated that a black student could not be denied admission to Central High School because the racial quota for African Americans had already been achieved. This ruling released Jefferson County from their desegregation order and

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2 Racial integration was achieved in the previous JCPS plans, yet many schools remained highly class segregated with over 90% of students on free and reduced lunch in some West End and Portland area elementary schools.
paved the way for the decision in *Meredith v. Jefferson County* (2007), which eventually limited the use of individual race in all schools.

**Meredith v. Jefferson County**

*Meredith v. Jefferson County* (2007) forever changed the landscape of school assignment, not only in Louisville, but in the US as well. This case, which was consolidated with a similar one in Seattle examined the right of a student to attend a school in his neighborhood. The parent, Crystal Meredith, filed suit on behalf of her son Joshua, who was denied admission to a Louisville kindergarten at the school closest to his home and assigned to a different school in the district in order to maintain the racial balance at both schools that was originally determined by the court system in the 1970's and then maintained by the school district. The petitioners claimed that “allocating children to different public schools based solely on their race violates the Fourteenth amendment’s equal protection guarantee” (*Meredith v. Jefferson County*, syllabus, p. 1). Despite the submission of amicus briefs that contained 59 studies supporting the positive impact of race conscious policies on students, the school districts’ aim to racially balance was not seen as sufficiently connected to the research (National Academy of Education, 2007). The justices did not see a direct connection between the crafting of the policies and the ultimate plan - specifically how much diversity was needed in order to reap the benefits of school desegregation. The majority opinion, written by Justice Roberts, took issue with the fact that the plans themselves were not established around a statistically reliable quantitative threshold of level of diversity but rather set out to achieve “the goal established by the school board of attaining a level of
diversity within the schools that approximates the district’s overall demographics” (p. 18-19). He went on to say, “We have many times over reaffirmed that racial balance is not to be achieved for its own sake” (p. 21). Roberts notes that *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg (1971)* did not require that every school district in the country reflect the demographics of its community.

The issue of past harm was not at issue in the *Meredith* case. In 2000 in *Hampton v. Jefferson County Board of Education (2000)*, the district was found to have eliminated the vestiges of prior segregation, and therefore the history of racism or de jure segregation could not be used to justify the new assignment plan as a race-conscious remedy for prior race-conscious harms. Clarence Thomas, in his concurring opinion, states that “remediation of past de jure segregation is a one-time process involving the redress of a discrete legal injury inflicted by an identified entity” (*Meredith v. Jefferson County*, 2007, Thomas, C. concurring p. 10). For the Majority, the crucial piece of the case is racial balancing, which according to the majority was declared unconstitutional in the precedent established in *Gratz v. Bollinger (2003)*. The majority and the dissenting disagree in this aspect of the ruling, as the dissenters “render pure racial balancing a constitutionally compelling interest (*Meredith*, Majority, p. 33).

Roberts, in an unusual and inflammatory fashion, uses *Brown* as his precedent to declare the Louisville and Seattle plans unconstitutional, stating that the “full compliance with *Brown* required school districts to achieve a system of determining admission to the public schools on a nonracial basis” (*Meredith v. Jefferson County*, 2007, Majority, p. 39).
The crucial piece of the *Meredith* decision is Justice Kennedy’s fifth vote. His concurring but separate opinion offers a path for school districts wanting to provide balance in their school population. Although Kennedy did not find the assignment plan narrowly tailored enough, he did see the idea of balance in schools and the diversity rationale quite differently from Roberts or Thomas. He says “the enduring hope is that race should not matter; the reality is that too often it does” (*Meredith v. Jefferson County*, Kennedy, concurring, p. 7). He responds to Thomas’s use of Justice Harlan’s opined “the constitution is color blind” by providing context to the statement, and responding that “in the real world, it is regrettable to say, it cannot be a universal constitutional principle” (*ibid*, p. 8). Invoking the precedent set in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), Kennedy states that his decision in *Meredith* is not a violation of *stare decisis*\(^3\) because both *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) involved systems where race was not the sole classification for students but instead relied on other factors of diversity to admit them. In both Seattle and Louisville, the race of the individual student is the sole deciding factor;

To be forced to live under a state-mandated racial label is inconsistent with the dignity of individuals in our society. And it is a label that an individual is powerless to change. Governmental classifications that command people to march in different directions based on racial typologies can cause a new divisiveness. The practice can lead to corrosive discourse, where race serves not

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\(^3\) Law doctrine that states the principles by which a court decided previous decisions are authoritative in future cases when the facts are substantially the same.
as an element of our diverse heritage but instead as a bargaining chip in the political process...the idea that if race is the problem, race is the instrument with which to solve it cannot be accepted as an analytical leap forward. (ibid, p. 17).

Kennedy goes on to say that he sees a compelling interest in avoiding racial isolation, contrary to the majority opinion written by Roberts and in agreement with the dissenting opinion. He believes that assignment policies can be race-conscious, and that a district can view diversity as a compelling interest. However, Kennedy does not agree that school districts can use individual race alone, stating that “crude measures of this sort threaten to reduce children to racial chits valued and traded according to one school’s supply and another’s demand” (ibid, p. 18). In an almost prescriptive statement for future policy he states, “Race may be one component of that diversity, but other demographics, plus special talents and needs, should also be considered” (ibid, p. 17).

The dissenting opinions in Meredith v. Jefferson County are emotional and vehement about the majority’s misreading of precedent. Justice Steven’s reply is especially charged and ends with “it is my firm conviction that no member of the Court that I joined in 1975 would have agreed with today’s decision” (ibid, dissenting, Stevens, p. 6). The Supreme Court members who dissented held that the court had understood in the past that race had real effects and recognizing that these effects would not violate constitutional principles. It was undeniably a departure from court precedents.

The decision in Meredith v. Jefferson County was seen by many as a reversal of over fifty years of precedents established by Brown vs. the Board of Education – that the government and the schools have an interest in maintaining diverse educational
institutions for the health of our democracy and for promoting equality of opportunity.

In the assessment of attorney James Ryan:

By pretending that desegregation was never really about integrating schools but instead only about colorblindness and remedies, the Justices in the plurality insult the memory of those advocates who risked injury and death to integrate public schools, and they insult those school officials and ordinary citizens who are trying to continue what heroic figures like Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall began before them. They insult the courageous and pioneering black students who attended formerly all-white schools treating their experience as an exercise in remedial formality, the importance of which magically disappeared once a court waved its wand and declared “unitary status.” The injury that past Court decisions inflicted on the cause of integration, to be sure, was significant if at times unintentional. This decision adds an insult large enough to match that injury (Ryan, 2007, p. 155).

Despite the dissenter's dismay at the court decision, Louisville had to live by it and craft a new policy. In response, the Jefferson County school district decided to maintain its commitment to diversity and craft a new plan that would answer some of Justice Kennedy’s requirements to move away from the individual race of students.

**The New Assignment Plan: No Retreat – JCPS Committed to Diversity**

In a publication entitled, “No Retreat: The JCPS Commitment to School Integration,” the Jefferson County School district outlines its objectives in maintaining an integrated school system (Jefferson County, 2010b). In this publication, the
Superintendent lists as a district objective to “retain the diversity that had already been achieved under the old plan but also to create a plan that would enhance the quality of every school” (Jefferson County, 2010b, p. 1). In an effort to maintain diversity in its schools, the Jefferson County district designed the new plan to assign students to schools based upon their residential address rather than individual racial characteristics. From a legal standpoint, “the addition of a wealth classification in Louisville’s new plan makes its constitutionality much more probable. Furthermore, the limited use of race in the new plan is highly likely to pass a strict scrutiny analysis” (Hines, 2008, p. 2221). The school district, starting in the 2009-2010 school year, began assigning students to schools to maximize the diversity of each school building, while being mindful of parental preference.

The new school assignment policy instituted by the Jefferson County School District uses neighborhood classification (A or B) to assign over 98,000 students to schools in a 300 square mile metropolitan area (JCPS, 2010). In order to balance the socioeconomic and racial composition of schools, the district, first, roughly divided the metropolitan area into six “pie” slices, with each pie piece having a tip in the downtown area and then widening out to incorporate the suburban areas in the widest outside edge of the pie. Each pie section, named a cluster, has urban neighborhoods, inner ring suburbs and outer ring suburbs in its zone. The school district then divided each of the six clusters into 12-15 "resides," drawn roughly around the elementary school buildings in the cluster. Each elementary school reside is classified as either an A or a B
Map 1.1 2010 - 2011 Elementary School Clusters
reside. An **Area A** reside is an elementary school zone in which the average household income is below $41,000, the average education level is less than “a high school diploma with some college,” and the minority population is more than 48 per cent (Hui, 2010). Minority students are defined as all students who are nonwhite. **Area B** resides are those elementary zones that do not meet the three criteria of an Area A reside. Area A has been formed to encompass areas of the city that are marginalized by race and class. Demographically, Area A resides are concentrated in the downtown and West End and Area B schools suburban. All students living in Area A are defined as Area A students, regardless of their family income, education level, or race. Likewise, all students living in Area B are defined as Area B students regardless of their individual family income, education level, or race. Therefore, an African-American student living in the far eastern suburbs would be classified as an Area B student despite her race. The school district has set a guideline that no school in the district will have more than 50% or less than 15% of students who reside in Area A. The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that no school will comprise predominately students from low income, high minority areas, and that all schools will have students from low income, high minority areas.

In addition to the schools that have a geographic catchment zone, the reside schools, the school district also operates a number of magnet schools and programs which specialize in particular types of curriculum and take students by application or lottery, depending on the school type. The different types of magnet schools are explained in the next section. Magnet schools are omitted from the Area A and B guidelines because of earlier court rulings that held that schools offering programs not
offered in other buildings must offer admission based upon lottery (Hampton v. Jefferson County, 2000). Magnet schools do not charge tuition. Free bus transportation is provided from home or a before-school program to the elementary school and from this school to home or an after-school program. Free bus transportation is not provided from home to a before-school program or from an after-school site to home because these programs are not part of the state-mandated public education system. This decision to leave it up to the parents to transport children for these segments of the day plays a pivotal role in the parent's reaction to school choice.

The school district provides information to parents about their schooling options in the public system; families receive a booklet, titled "Choices," describing their cluster, the school programs in their cluster, and the magnet programs available to all families in the district. In addition, the school district holds what it calls a "Showcase of Schools" at the convention center in October to provide information about all schools in one central location. Tours and Open Houses are held at schools in January and the application period for elementary schools begins on February 1st of each year preceding enrollment with applications due by March 1st. Families in this study used the application form in APPENDIX A to rank their top four school choices among the schools in their cluster. Their four choices must include two schools in Area A and two schools in Area B in their respective cluster (Jefferson County Public Schools, 2009). Schools that are in Area A and Area B may have special programs such as preparation for the
Advanced program\textsuperscript{4}, small class sizes, or a focus on an area such as visual arts or health and fitness. The student can include their elementary resides school as their top choice, but they do not have to, and there is no guarantee that they will be assigned to that school. They can also fill out a separate section listing their top two magnet schools out of the eight magnet elementary schools that serve the entire school district. School assignments are based upon a combination of parental preference, diversity guidelines, the assignment of student’s siblings, the student’s reside school, and the programmatic needs of the student. However, outside individuals are not given access to the actual school assignment process and there was much conjecture among parents about how selection actually occurred.

High School and Middle School placement is based upon the residential address of the students and students are also asked for their preferences. Parents can choose to apply to one of the many magnet middle schools or high schools, and preference for admittance is given to elementary students who attended an elementary magnet in that track. For example, a student who attended one of the traditional elementary schools has preference at the traditional middle school and a student attending the math and science magnet school has an advantage in being accepted at the math and science middle school\textsuperscript{5}.

\textsuperscript{4} Jefferson County has an Advanced Program for academically gifted and talented students. Testing to get into the program starts in the third grade. Not all of the schools in the district offer the Advanced Program, which usually operates as tracked classes within a school building.

\textsuperscript{5} By instituting this preference model, JCPS has incentivized attendance at the magnet elementary schools that are all located in low income high minority areas in the downtown and western side of the city. Without this preference portion of the plan, parents would be more likely to send their elementary aged children to neighborhood schools and wait until middle school or high school to bus their students downtown. The preferential treatment means that there is a waiting list for the traditional and math and
Other Choices: Anchorage, Oldham and Private

Beyond the choices available within the Jefferson County School District, the Louisville Metro area also has robust private school offerings, including both parochial and secular schools. The secular schools of Collegiate, St. Francis and Kentucky Country Day have been operating in Louisville for many years and have an established alumni base. Newer Christian schools, including The Louisville Latin School, also have strong followings. Catholic education is well-developed in Louisville, and the archdiocese holds a Catholic Schools Fair in October of each year to attract both Catholics and non-Catholics. The archdiocese has parish schools designated to serve Catholic families belonging to particular churches as well as independent Catholic schools which serve all parishes. The Catholic schools do not discriminate against non-Catholics but do give preference to parish members for enrollment. In addition, parishioners pay lower tuition as they are expected to tithe to the church in lieu of the higher tuition rate.

There are also public schools in commuting distance of Louisville, outside of the Jefferson County system. Anchorage, which is actually located within the geographic area of Jefferson County, is an independent district which existed prior to the merger of the Jefferson County and Louisville City School districts. Anchorage has maintained its own school district for 100 years and currently maintains grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Anchorage residents who want to attend a public high school are allowed to enroll in a Jefferson County Public High School. Oldham County, the county to the
northeast of Jefferson County, has three nationally ranked high schools and uses a neighborhood assignment plan for its elementary schools (Oldham County Schools, 2012). Oldham County has had a great deal of housing development in the past twenty years with many of the farms having been developed into middle class subdivisions with large houses on small lots. Driving from Oldham County to downtown Louisville takes

http://www.kipda.org/
about thirty minutes, and this area is heavily promoted to transplants by corporations who are relocating white collar workers to Louisville. Neighboring public districts also include Bullitt and Shelby counties, which border Jefferson County to the South and have also had housing development and increasing student enrollment. In general, the housing prices in Bullitt and Shelby Counties are lower than in Oldham County and there is a larger prevalence of white working class families, whereas Oldham County has largely drawn white professionals. Students living in Oldham, Bullitt and Shelby Counties are not subject to the assignment guidelines of the Jefferson County School District, since the mid 1970’s they have been a destination for parents seeking to avoid busing in the Jefferson County School District. Kentucky also allows parents to home school if they choose and the regulations for homeschooling are relatively flexible, with no requirements for the education level of the home school supervisor or strict guidelines for curriculum.  

Description of the Study

The purpose of this study is to illuminate how parents respond to an assignment plan that uses income in combination with race and education level to place students in school. Rather than look at how parents who are in the public school market chose their school, I examine how parents appraised the entire school marketplace, understanding that children cannot be compelled by the school district to attend the

7 http://www.kde.state.ky.us/KDE/About+Schoo ls+and+Districts/Home+Schooling+in+Kentucky/Kentucky+Home+School+Requirements.htm
school to which they are assigned. Parents, especially those of economic means, have choices beyond those of the public school district, and in order to understand the impact of the school assignment policy, it is imperative to look at how parents who chose to opt out of the public school system came to that decision.

In order to understand parental decision-making and to investigate how parents reproduce their racial and class privilege, I conducted in-depth interviews with 23 parents in Louisville with children between the ages of four and twelve about their school choice process. I present the findings of those interviews in chapters Four through Six of this dissertation. In bringing together the stories of the choice process for these parents, I uncover the surface-level decision making that policy-makers are concerned with in crafting the rules and logistics of assignment. In looking at the consistency of the testimony of parents, I also describe how the logic of parents’ lives relates to a deeper social logic that is structured around class and racial divisions – a logic that many parents did not consciously see or at least want to discuss with a qualitative researcher. This deeper analysis examines how “color-blind” ideology works to reproduce racial and class privilege and in effect undermines even the policies that are designed to increase equity and access to schools for students of color and low-income students. The quiet and unspoken logic of racial and class stratification that exists in parents’ “color-blind” decision-making illuminates how the assignment plan in Louisville still operates to maintain a social order that is difficult or almost impossible to escape. Utilizing the theories of Bourdieu and Wacquant to understand how institutions of schooling reproduce the social order, I look at parent decision-making to see how it
works to construct social realities despite the lack of conscious analysis on the part of parents. To be more transparent, I look at how parents use the vocabularies of “inconvenience” and “achievement” to justify decisions that maintain their place in schools and hence their racial and/or socioeconomic positions.

**Theorizing Race and Class in the Era of Color-Blind Ideology**

The “color-blind” rhetoric in the decision-making of the Supreme Court is part and parcel of a larger societal conversation about race. As parents in the study made decisions about schools and articulated the process by which they made these decisions, the value of “color-blindness,” or not seeing race, was crucial to their understanding of who they were in this process and how they related to the parents, students and school officials they encountered in the choice process. To understand how parents made decisions about schools, I examined how parental decisions and resistance to the assignment plan reproduced social and racial class positions and how articulations of the process were steeped in language related to equality, achievement and convenience; purposefully avoiding discussions of race or even admissions of seeing race at all. Within their conversations and explicit in their decisions, was a reproduction of their race and class position, as parents most often chose schools where their own racial or class background matched that of the majority of students in the school. The logic of their decision-making maintained the social hierarchy in both race and class. Calling on the work of Bourdieu to understand how cultures reproduce themselves, and supplementing this understanding of cultural reproduction with theories of racial
formation and color-blind ideology, I perceive the decision-making of parents as movements towards reproduction of race and class privilege to maintain the status quo.

**Theory of Cultural Capital and its Implications for School Choice**

Theories of cultural capital, how people use mostly non-monetary means to confer and maintain class hierarchies can largely be traced back to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s theories, grounded in ethnographic fieldwork, survey data, and document analysis, attempt to uncover how power reproduces itself in society (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 1998, Grenfell, 2008). Bourdieu hoped “to abandon the economic/non-economic dichotomy (in favor of)....a science capable of treating all practices” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 122). Although he was drawn to and borrowed heavily from Marx’s materialist vision of class distinction, he aimed to expand the understanding of class to incorporate the power of culture to distinguish and establish social and institutional hierarchies.

Bourdieu believed that there is a social hierarchy that is meaningful and real in society and that people have a way of understanding and living out their social class in the decisions they make, most of the time not consciously aware of how their "choices" are manifestations of their class position. Using this understanding of choice as a social construction that maintains class hierarchies, I was mindful in my discussions with parents of the social and racial classifications they ascribed to themselves and the racial and class make-up of the schools they ultimately chose.

Bourdieu believed that from the time a child is born, she is taught ways of being in the world that reflect her parent’s position in society. These teachings are implicit and organic; their consistent repetition of particular values and ways of being shapes
who the child is and what she believes (Reed-Danahay, 2005, p. 46). As the child listens to her parents’ reactions to the world, as she observes them interacting with officials at her school and others in society, she adopts a way of seeing the world and in turn begins to repeat or “reproduce” the same actions, manners of speaking, and attitudes. These attitudes and manners of speaking became important in my study as parents described schools in relation to many of these factors, talking about how certain schools embodied characteristics that were either "like me" or "not like me." Bourdieu names this the *habitus*, a set of dispositions or ways of seeing and reacting to the world. Unique to Bourdieu is the idea that these dispositions become “the social embodied” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 128); that our physicality reflects our social position and upbringing. A parent’s social position or culture becomes a part of the child. Bourdieu believed that the particular ways in which we embody our culture is related to the material effects of our existence, which in turn rest upon our particular economic and class position (Maton, 2008, p.51).

An important part of Bourdieusian analysis is an understanding of *doxa*, the experience by which the “natural and social world appear as self-evident” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). This experience, Bourdieu separates from orthodoxy and heterodoxy which require recognition and awareness. *Doxa* is the experience by which agents understand the rhythm of their particular lives as “natural,” and do not question it as a constructed experience. As Bourdieu (1989b) describes it,

One may even explain in sociological terms what appears to be a universal property of human experience, namely the fact that the familiar world tends to
be taken for granted, perceived as natural... As perceptive dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine. (p. 18).

Subjects do not question the rhythm of their social world, yet are mystified/offended by those who violate it. To explain the experience of doxa, Bourdieu describes in *Outline of a Theory of a Practice* (1977), the daily rituals of the Kabylian people whom he studied in the 1970’s in Algeria. He explains the emphasis on rising early and not staying up late, when it is okay to move into public space, and when and who can attend to cooking and entertaining. He shows how the people take these rhythms and positions as natural and are not aware of the way these daily cultural occurrences organize their daily life.

Bourdieu posits that modern societies also have their own rhythms, which we do not consciously see in everyday life, but which we repeat and act out and, most importantly, which we recognize when subjects step outside of this way of being, marking them as subjects who do not belong. This important part of the "natural" feel of our choices was evident with my participants, who described their choices as "just what they do" in their family or something that made sense for the "logic of their life." They did not consciously consider how particular choices were "raced" or "classed" or how the effects were "raced" or "classed." Bourdieu maintained that the most surprising aspect of doxa is how very few violators there are. Violators were very few in my study as well, as the majority of participants made "choices" that maintained their space and
also seemed mystified by those parents who made "choices" that violated the “natural” order of race and class distinctions.

For Bourdieu, all of these acts of social reproduction and displays of cultural capital happen within various fields. The concept of fields was not formally introduced into Bourdieu’s work until the release of *The State Nobility* in 1989, although he spoke of fields in the 1970’s (Wacquant, 1989 forward, p.xi), and discussed a similar concept in *Distinction (1984)*, which he called social space. A field for Bourdieu replaces the idea of the dichotomous class structure of Marx, offering instead “a global social space within which each person has a series of better or worse addresses which constitute his/her social trajectory” (Earle, 1999, p. 177). And each field fits into a greater hierarchy in the societal fields of power. “A field is, in the first instance, a structured space of positions, a force field that imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it” (Wacquant, 1998: 268). Bourdieu’s fields reflected multiple continuums of occupations and positions according to various criteria, including, autonomous to non-autonomous, technocratic to technical, and elite schooling to non-elite schooling. Jobs that were high in autonomy, required prestigious degrees, and/or were highly technocratic were fields that offered more distinction/power. He believed that the levels of distinction among all fields and within each field were not always based upon economic capital. These fields of power were evident in my study of Louisville as parents ascribed certain rules of power within certain institutional structures, in private school spaces, within the elite magnet schools, and in the hierarchy of neighborhoods. The chapters of the dissertation are organized around three specific fields; the first field, the family, in which
parents teach a *habitus* to their child; the second field, the neighborhood, which parents
discuss as a place that reflects their values or ways of seeing the world; and the third
field, the institution of schooling, which through its student body composition and
reputation both instructs and reinforces a social/class hierarchy.

Bourdieu posits that the struggle inside each field illuminates how cultural
capital learned from birth influences who wins the struggle for distinction within each
field (Bourdieu, 1989a). The microcosms in society have their own rules and
regulations, manners of being, and ways of structuring power, and these microcosms
exist in a larger, more amorphous system of power. Bourdieu attempted to map how
various fields structured power and how individuals employed social, cultural, symbolic,
and economic capital within a field to maintain power. Thus, each neighborhood was
part of a greater social hierarchy, and within each neighborhood there was another
distinct hierarchy. In the same way, the types of schools in Louisville had their own
hierarchy, and parents and students, vied for social positions within the overall
hierarchy of schools but also sought to obtain or maintain power within fields that did
not have greater social power. This idea of fields is central to understanding how class
and race works across a metropolitan area that has been constructed around racial and
class distinctions. Bourdieu believed that fields could overlap in actual geographic space
yet remain distinct fields with their particular dispositions and connections to those
outside the field. These fields are an important factor in understanding how power is
conferred within families, neighborhoods, and schools in the study. Mapping the
neighborhoods and schools of Louisville, and observing how people confer power or
seek access to various fields of power reveals their place in the social hierarchy.

Observing the direction of their decision-making and the ultimate results of their decisions reveals how they make moves to reproduce their position in society.

At the heart of Bourdieu’s theory is the idea that the greatest reproducer of social inequality and the maintainer of the power structure is the institution of schooling. Bourdieu believed that schools functioned as miniature adult societies with the same hierarchies of power and class division within them and among them. How a student is treated within this hierarchy confirms on a daily basis their place in the power structure. Schooling, then, serves as a social regulator that facilitates the acceptance of a marginalized position. Because the dispositions of ruling class children in the home matches the dispositions (*habitus*) valued by teachers and academic institutions, school and in particular privileged schools feels familiar and coherent to ruling class children. The dispositions of marginalized children, however, deviate from the habits and values of the school; these children, therefore, feel alienated and confused by the expectations in the school environment. As a result, ruling class children succeed in school, receiving praise and rewards for reenacting the *habitus* learned at home; in contrast, marginalized children are classified as special education, labeled as behavior problems, 8

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8 I am choosing to use the term marginalized children in this instance to cover a wide-range of children whose habitus does not match the expectations of schooling. Because I believe that Bourdieu distanced himself from binary class distinction, and in some instances points to a differing habitus for boys and girls in French society, I do think he was aiming for a “big-tent” theory that would incorporate how multiple identities of powerlessness are recreated and reinforced by schooling. Using the term marginalized allows for an intersectional lens on how society reproduces inequality, as schools reinforce hierarchies of race, gender, religion, and heteronormativity in their cultural practices of awards and certifications. Qualitative work that demonstrates these reproduced hierarchies can be seen in Bettie’s (2003) *Women without Class: Girls, Race, and Identity*, Pascoe’s (2007) *Dude you’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, and Ferguson’s (2001) *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. 
or repeatedly told that they are not academically gifted through the absence of awards or other distinctions. Teachers, administrators, coaches and parents reward and recognize those students who demonstrate competence in the culture of the elite – and this is most easily accomplished by the children of the elite. For Bourdieu, this transmission of power is bound up in the idea that modern society needed to legitimate the status of the ruling class without using the physical violence acceptable in many primitive cultures or the religious power wielded by theocracies. As the modern democratic state moved away from the hereditary succession of monarchies, or the religious rule of theocracies, the ruling class began to rely on educational institutions to award certificates and prestigious diplomas to demonstrate the “worthiness” of the descendents of the ruling class (Bourdieu, 1989a, p.5). This institutionalization of hereditary power in school success allows power to be maintained without the awareness and/or strong resistance of the marginalized classes.

The bounded field of Louisville-Jefferson County contains educational options inside and outside the school district: private schools, homeschooling, and outlying districts in commuting distance of employers in the city. For the most economically powerful in the Louisville area, private schooling is a distinct option. The robust system of private schools indicates high demand for private options. Because the aim of the school assignment plan is increased diversity and educational opportunity, Bourdieu’s theories of power and social reproduction are key to assessing whether the assignment policy is effective in achieving its aims.
The movements of parents in light of the assignment policy highlight Bourdieu’s central tenet, that power will reinvent itself, reshape itself to justify its existence. “The power to make visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is political power par excellence. It is the power to make groups, to manipulate the objective structure of society” (Bourdieu, 1989b: 23). Throughout the choice process, parents make movements to maintain or regain access to power and privilege – they move towards reproducing their power and when they feel disconnected from power, they make movements to maintain a position in their field. They frame this connection to a field around "feeling comfortable," and do not necessarily intend for these movements to be reproductions of power but rather experience it as the "natural" choice.

**Racial Formations, “Color-Blind” Racism and Polite Conversations**

Race has been a central organizing feature of American society since its inception. Our conception of race has changed over time as both scientific and sociological understandings of race have developed. Racial categories, as they are understood in the current period, are sociological constructs - ones that we have created and which can be contested (Almaguer, 2008). Because there is no single gene for race, scientific categorization or mapping of the races is impossible. The socially constructed view of race can be problematic for some because it seems to indicate that race is a fiction. Yet there is a material reality to race – a way in its visibility impacts the everyday lived experiences of people. Due to this material reality and the terrible injustices related to
historical and contemporary discrimination and oppression, race is a crucial sociological construct to theorize about and to understand.

Omi and Winant (1994) define racial formation as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55). Their book, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960’s to the 1990’s*, describes the historical trajectory of “racial projects” which lead to racial formation - a formation that changes over time as actors react to the preceding historical moment. Omi and Winant (1994) posit that racial formation happens at both the macro and micro level. The macro level is concerned with political movements, changes in law, and the evolution of institutional treatments of race. The micro-level deals with racial formation in the everyday experiences of individuals and looks at the ways individuals not only notice race but categorize and compartmentalize based upon race. Fitting people into a category makes them intelligible to us, and this intelligibility gives them a place in the social structure. Both the macro-level and micro-level racial projects inculcate us into a racialized social structure in which we are implicitly and explicitly taught, not only our racial role, but the racial role of others as well. The authors believe that racial projects “are merely the present-day outcomes of a complex historical evolution” (Omi and Winant, 1994, p. 61). Documenting the movement from one racial project to the next borrows from Hegel’s conception of societal change, which looked at historical evolution. Hegel believed that by following the trajectory of history, one could predict the next historical period. Every change evoked an extreme counter-movement and because of this extremity the counter-movement could not be maintained, and
therefore society would move back to a middle ground – not on the same circle but at a
different point (Houlgate, 1998). This idea of the dialectic dynamism of history suggests
much about the evolution of race relations in Louisville, because it addresses the fact
that parents in the current period are, in part, responding to a past historical
interpretation and application of law to the construct of race and so the historical
trajectory of the social and legal understanding of race is crucial in interpreting the
current reaction to "racialized" spaces. Omi and Winant use this same type of trajectory
in their historical discussion of racial formation, and state that “by knowing how it
evolved, we can perhaps better discern where it is heading” (p.61). Their theories focus
on macro-level projects - the pattern of racial formation which occurs in the public
sphere.

Omi and Winant in their macro-level analysis point to the pervasive nature of a
“color-blind ideology” in American social thought. Color-blind racism is extensively
theorized by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, who examines through ethnographic and survey
data, the contemporary conception of race held by both white and people of color in
the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). This “color-blind” ideology has been defined by Bonilla-
Silva as a way of neutralizing discussions of race in a terrain that is not neutral. This
neutralization is accomplished by "(1) denying preferential treatments – even those that
are reparative (2) explaining segregation as natural preferences (3) assuming successful
groups obtain success through better adaptation and (4) minimizing accusations of
racism and dismissing racist claims" (Young, 2010, p.321). The movement toward this
color-blind ideology is in reaction to a paradigm shift in American society that makes it
unacceptable to make overt racist claims. Since the 1960’s, posit Omi and Winant (1994), “racial equality had to be acknowledged as a desirable goal” (p. 117). This evolution to a place where recognition of race or acknowledgement of race is taboo is crucial to the way my respondents talked and did not talk about race. Espousing a belief in racial equality and anti-oppression is a social norm in “polite society,” and therefore discovering how my participants did and did not use race to choose schools was difficult. Although research indicates that many Americans still use racist speech in their casual interactions with friends, they censor this speech when speaking with people of color or people they do not know (Myers and Williamson, 2001). It would be understandable that my participants would not feel comfortable using direct racist speech about why they chose particular schools. Yet despite the absence of explicitly racist speech, choices made by individuals operate within institutions and geographies that are raced and these "choices" have raced effects. The theory of "color-blind" racism posits that post-civil rights racism is primarily one of effect and is understood by social actors as "natural" or just "preferences" and is therefore resistant to government intervention or public remedies. This "color-blind" racism is more about a shared understanding of racial geographies than willful acts of discrimination against individuals. The result of "color-blind" racism however is a continuation of racial hierarchies and the maintenance of white privilege.

Marrying Bourdieu’s idea of Doxa and Bonilla-Silva’s conception of "color-blind" racism leads to an understanding that because people reproduce their social position in the
world, giving them "choice" in their schools will create schools that are further and further segregated by both race and class.

To understand parental decision-making, it became important for me to examine the decision-making on two levels, first, where parents feel that their decisions are made – on a very practical level about concerns of logistics. These concerns are the ones that can be the most easily tackled by policy-makers, and then on a second level where the disconnect for parents occurs and they began to discuss their choices in a veiled language that indicates race but does not explicitly recognize race, or class for that matter as a justification for their choice. Specifically, I pay particular attention to how parents “find” schools that match their race and/or class without ever saying that they are looking for such a match.

Outline of Chapters

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters and an appendix. The introductory chapter has introduced the topic to readers explained the background information necessary to understand the assignment plan. The second chapter discusses the body of literature on desegregation and school choice. Specifically, it looks at histories of desegregation in the south and the theories and results related to integrating students by racial and economic differences. Additionally, the review looks at the literature on school choice, delving in to how parents act as consumers when given choices in schools and exploring the factors prioritized by parents in the school
choice process. Research methods and a focus on data collection, data analysis, ethical issues and the social location of the researcher are discussed in Chapter Three.

The data chapters are organized to reflect the theories of Bourdieu in relation to social and cultural capital. Our primary habitus, the family, is discussed in Chapter Four and shows the ways in which parents construct the logic of their daily lives in ways that teach their children their habitus. Neighborhood, the subject of Chapter Five, is the location of the home and reflects the values of this primary habitus as it is used as an extension of the family. The logic of the neighborhood and its segregation also serve to reproduce the racial/class privilege of students and are an extension of this primary habitus. Chapter Six looks at what Bourdieu terms the secondary habitus, the place in which children learn their place in the social order, and investigates the ways in which schools resist and reproduce social hierarchies in the adherence to and rejection of the student assignment plan. The family chapter looks at how participants organize their family life and looks at how the logistics of running a household interacts with schooling choices. The neighborhood chapter discusses how parents construct community, specifically focusing how geography intersects with identity, housing and schooling. The sixth data chapter, Markets for Schools discusses how schools market themselves and how their construction of the institution of school impacts parents decisions to enroll their sons or daughters.

The seventh and final chapter summarizes the findings, discusses the limitations of the study, and presents the implications for education policy. The appendix contains
maps of the school district, the application for the school assignment plan, the Showcase of Schools promotional materials and a magnet school application.
CHAPTER TWO: A Review of the Literature

It is in the schools that we learn the art of living together as citizens,
and it is in public schools that we are obliged to defend the idea of a public,
not only a private, interest (Meier, 2002, p. 176).

The academic literature on the structure and “problems” of urban schooling in America for the past forty years has often focused on either the desegregation of schools or school choice. Both of these issues have been viewed by various policy-makers and academics as the “silver-bullet” for dealing with the “crisis” in urban schools. As years of movements against desegregation through white flight undermined school integration, districts looked to create magnet schools of choice and eventually, in the late 1990’s, the education reform movement attached itself to the idea of charter schools of choice as the answer to the problems of urban education (Ravitch, 2010). Both of these bodies of work, desegregation and school choice are vital to understanding the decision-making process of parents in Louisville. The historical realities of desegregation are paramount in light of the Supreme Court’s recent moves toward race-neutral solutions, the type of solution that the court demanded that the Jefferson County School system adopt.

Much of the school choice literature focuses on the advent of charter schools and the policy push from the education reform movement to increase access to charters. The propaganda for choice that is omnipresent in the films funded by the education reform movement (see “Waiting for Superman,” and “Won’t Back Down”)
construct the neighborhood public school as pariah, and choice through charters as the necessary solution. However, many of the issues faced by parents choosing among charters and the regular public school are consistent with the experiences of parents in Louisville\(^9\) who are choosing among specialty magnet schools, regular public schools, homeschooling, and a robust private school market. The literature on school choice illuminates the factors that influence a parent’s choice of school whether it is in terms of magnets or charters. Magnet schools were the first public choice model in the U.S. system and a choice model that prioritized integrated schooling as a mechanism to increase achievement and social cohesion (Frankenberg and Siegel-Hawley, 2008).

School choice is not merely a function of charter and magnet schools. School choice continues to be a reality for people with financial means as parents or grandparents can financially support the choice of a private school if the public school is undesirable. Parents without means but with time and interest also have choice through the option of homeschooling, a choice that was employed by many parents immediately after moves to desegregate schools in the 1960’s and 1970’s.

In recognizing that parents do have other choices for schooling, the Jefferson County School District contends with a marketplace in which students and parents can make choices that undermine the ultimate goal of diverse schools. Ultimately parents,\(^9\) Kentucky does not have a charter school provision in state law. Along with nine other states, Kentucky has resisted charter schools largely because of the state’s demographics and geography. Charter schools, which pull students out of the regular public school are located largely in urban areas because rural areas do not have enough students. As the only large metropolitan area, Louisville would be the only natural choice for charters and it already has a robust magnet school system which offers many of the specialties used to market charters. Therefore, the push for charter schools was not able to gain public support. Not until the state lost out on significant federal financial support in its failed bid for the Race to the Top program did Kentucky seriously consider charter schools.
especially those with means, can choose to opt out. Because they can choose, how they choose and why they choose is fundamental to our understanding of the possible impacts of school assignment policies.

Furthermore, in the context of Louisville, the desegregation plans of the past and the current assignment plan are products of policy initiatives undertaken to desegregate schools. Therefore, understanding desegregation, its roots, and the impacts of educational policies used to address apartheid-like schooling in America is crucial to understanding how and why Jefferson County established a school assignment policy in the manner that it did and why it continues to value diverse schools.

**Desegregation: Policies and Results**

*Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954) first established that separate schools were not equal schools and were not in the best interest of individual children or of society as a whole. Further Supreme Court rulings compelled districts to take a more active role in racially integrating schools (*Green v. County School Board of New Kent Count*, 1968; *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971). These decisions were based in large part on social science evidence that racial segregation creates detrimental outcomes for society. Quantitative studies have revealed over the years the negative impact of segregation on academic achievement for marginalized groups and the positive impacts of integration (*Bifulco et al.*, 2009; Coleman et al., 1966; Hoxby, 2000; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Lee, 2007; Rumberger and Palardy, 2005). Qualitative studies have shown that students who have been bused from urban high
minority to integrated suburban schools feel that their experiences in county schools increased their expectations of themselves as well as their knowledge of how to succeed in the dominant culture (Heaney and Uchitelle, 2004; Wells et al., 2009).

The social experiment of desegregation by design has always had its detractors. These critics want proof that desegregation works, and what they often look for is quantifiable results showing that the education of students of color has improved as a result. There is much research demonstrating that the socioeconomic level and race of a school dictates the achievement levels of its students. These achievement data can be useful in making a case for desegregation, but are not the only piece used to support the concept of diverse by design. Exploring the literature on the diversity rationale and how parents make choices about schools aids in our understanding of how desegregation both works and does not work in a metropolitan school district, and also suggests how parents might navigate the system depending on their own social location.

**Desegregation to Close the Achievement Gap**

Positioning Brown as a solution to the achievement gap has been a successful tack in the U.S. court system. The negative impacts on achievement that result from high minority/low income schools have been widely documented in quantitative studies. Research suggests that segregated schools have negative externalities for

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10 Externalities are defined by economists as by-products of production that are not accounted for in the production process. Negative externalities are essentially costs that result from a production process not paid for by the producer. In the case of schools, the specific design or composition may result in costs for society. Therefore, a school that consistently produces drop-outs is a school that creates costs for society. Society is spending money on the school with the intent of creating a product — a contributing citizen. If
society in the lowered achievement results of the students who attend them. Racially isolated and low income schools by and large produce students with lower achievement scores than their peers in racially or economically integrated schools (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Rumberger and Palardy, 2005). The achievement differences between students from wealthy schools and those students from poor schools have persisted over time. In a reanalysis of the Coleman data, researchers found that African Americans, in particular, had higher test scores when they attended a school with a higher mean socioeconomic composition (Jencks and Mayer, 1990). This research suggests that the impact of the socioeconomic level of the students in a classroom is an important predictor of achievement.  

Rumberger and Palardy (2005) conducted an analysis of the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data set to determine the impact of school composition on student achievement. The researchers divided the schools in the sample into three tiers: high socio-economic status (SES) schools, middle SES schools and low SES schools. They then looked at average growth in achievement scores for students in each tier, finding that the most important predictor of increased achievement was the SES composition of the school - and in three areas: science, reading, and history – the socioeconomic status of a student’s school had a greater impact on their achievement than their own socioeconomic level (Rumberger and Palardy, 2005). Furthermore, they found that the SES of a school had a greater impact on African-American students than the school produces something else, and that something else has costs-then it is a negative externality. See Ming and Marlis for a discussion of externalities (Mings and Marlin, 2000).  

The results of the Coleman study and others like it are complicated to interpret because of their dependence on a deficit discourse which interprets low socioeconomic level as a fixed identity marker uncomplicated by other factors in the environment.
it did on White students. In a simulation to predict achievement changes resulting from attending a different school, the researchers found that an average African-American student moved from a low SES school to a high SES school would increase achievement by about one full year of learning over the expected outcome if he/she remained in the original school, and the average white student would gain about \(\frac{3}{4}\) of a year of schooling. Rumberger and Palardy state that the school processes that occur in high SES schools, namely, high teacher expectations, hours of homework, number of college prep courses, and perceived safety of the school all contribute to the increased learning that occurs there.

Bifulco et al. (2009) looked at classmate characteristics to determine if peer effects had a significant impact on achievement. They found that an increase in the percentage of a student’s classmates with a college educated mother was associated with higher rates of college attendance and lower high school drop-out rates (Bifulco, 2009). Peer effects based upon racial composition of the classroom were also explored by Hoxby (2000) in an analysis of administrative data from Texas elementary schools in the 1990’s. She found that the intra-group effects on black students with more black students in their classroom depressed achievement by .67 points in reading and .40 points in math. This impact of greater numbers of black students in a class had the most detrimental effect on other black students (Hoxby, 2000). Hoxby’s research suggests that segregated black schools depress overall achievement for black students.

Segregation by race, education level, and economic class have all been shown to depress achievement for students placed in schools that are predominantly high
minority, low income, and/or low education level. The push for desegregation policies comes from the understanding that increasing achievement and closing the achievement gap depends, in part, on desegregating schools to produce as few schools as possible with a predominately minority or low-income student population.

**The Diversity Rationale**

Achievement scores on state examinations and NAEP tests are often seen as the best rationale for desegregating schools. Yet achievement scores on tests that are an imprecise measure of cognitive ability may not be the outcome that is most important to society. Other non-cognitive measures and outcomes may offer more compelling reasons to create racially and economically diverse schools. The outcomes for society in terms of social cohesion, decreased hostility and violence between groups, and increased social mobility for members of marginalized groups have all been acknowledged as by-products of learning and working in diverse environments. Furthermore, there is a recognition that integrated schooling can give students access to other forms of privilege, such as an understanding of social norms related to work, ways to speak and act in the workplace, and connections to people or institutions for work opportunities. The access to cultural or social capital in integrated schools has been shown to increase the social mobility of marginalized groups. Integrated schools also impact whites, reducing their biases and increasing their likelihood of seeking diverse neighborhoods in which to live.
Heaney and Uchitelle’s (2004) historical study of desegregation points to exemplar schools in the desegregation of the St. Louis metropolitan area, which is often cited as one of the most comprehensive and successful integration plans in the country. It was the largest plan instituted: five times the size of the Boston plan, and twice the size of the Milwaukee plan (Heaney, 2004, p 129). Perhaps the most successful part of the St. Louis plan was that it was voluntary. African American students who lived in the city could request an inter-district transfer to a county school, and county schools were encouraged to seek an enrollment target of 15% African American students. Research has shown that “school districts that have a mandatory school desegregation plan lost one third more white students than those who never had a plan….and those with a voluntary-only plan experienced less than a three percent enrollment loss” (Raffel, 1998, p 281). Furthermore, given the financial incentives for accepting students from the city, administrators in the county were inclined to put their full support behind the plan because it meant that they would not have to lay off teachers or ask their residents to pay higher taxes (Monti, 1985, p 149). The entire climate surrounding the plan was much less adversarial than other desegregation plans, partially because it was voluntary and partially because St. Louis was one of the latest plans; the plan was not instituted until 1983. The students in Heaney and Uchitelle’s study of desegregation in St. Louis spoke of the increased access to cultural and social capital in predominantly white schools and how this access could transform lives. Derrick Brooks, a chemical engineering undergrad at Washington University, and a participant in the St. Louis desegregation program, put it this way:
At Kirkwood (county school), everybody was expected to go to college. In the city schools, if you go to college, you have done something amazing...So that whole atmosphere subconsciously is like just graduating is enough, so I don’t necessarily have to go to college. I can just get a good job. When you go to a county school, you’re expected to go to college..... Now the only biggie is which college to choose...the counselors were right there willing to help (Heaney and Uchitelle, 2004, p. 139).

Brooks mentions that counselors care about students and are willing to assist them in achieving their dreams, demonstrating that integration by itself was not sufficient, that its success came about because of adults in the building dedicated to affirmative action's goal of inclusion for African-American students. Sonia Nieto talks about this twin approach to reducing bias when she looks at Nel Noddings ethics of care in combination with Stanton-Salazar’s theory of social capital networks framework (Nieto, 2005, p.50). Nieto’s combination of these two theories points to the fact that social networks are crucial but not sufficient without an ethic of care, meaning that if teachers and counselors are not aware of privilege and prejudice, and are not connected to undoing racism in their work, they may be reinforcing historical discrimination patterns. In Derrick Brook’s case, he felt that his counselors were caring members of his social network, and that they had access to the cultural capital needed to help him apply to and get accepted by Washington University.

The original intent of the school assignment plan in Louisville - Jefferson County was to racially integrate the schools. The goal of racial integration was based on the
Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown* that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (*Brown v. Board*, 1954). Although *Brown* aimed to correct the unequal access of black students to academic resources that would enable them to be as successful as their white counterparts, providing an equal education was and is not the only rationale accepted by the courts. The Supreme Court has accepted the diversity rationale as a compelling interest of the state (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). This rationale is based upon the idea that first, we are a racially diverse nation, second we all need to have access to all places in society in order to realize our potential; and finally, that individuals’ exposure to multiple points of view and diverse peoples will serve to make our democracy stronger. The diversity rational has its philosophical roots in the writings of Aristotle, who believed that democracy operates at its optimal point when a diversity of interests is considered in political decision-making (*Moses and Chang*, 2006). It complicates the intent of *Brown* and subsequent desegregation rulings that primarily sought to eliminate the vestiges of slavery and other discriminatory laws by going further to suggest that diversity in itself is a good that promotes the functioning of a sound democratic society.

The benefits of desegregation are not limited to African-Americans; white students benefit from the ruling as well. Research shows that intergroup contact reduces bias in white students, enabling them to be more effective members of a diverse society. When students are exposed to diverse groups, they are less likely to generalize about groups, less likely to avoid other groups because of lack of knowledge, and more likely to recognize injustice based on group status (*Dovidio et al.*, 2004, p.)
251-252). Specifically, friendship across races has been shown to reduce prejudice (Killen, 2006, p. 62). Furthermore, when groups have experiences in which they are asked to cooperate, for example in extra-curricular activities or on sports teams, they learn to trust people across the lines of race, class, ability, and gender (Johnson and Johnson, 2000, p. 244).

The ability to make friends across racial lines and the successes of integration were revealed by the participants in Amy Stuart Wells’ (2009) *Both Sides Now: The Story of Desegregation’s Graduates*. In this qualitative study, the researcher examined the social context of school desegregation and unearthed "the ways in which the racial inequality of the schools so profoundly affected the daily experiences of students" (40). Wells and her team conducted in-depth interviews of over forty members of the class of 1980 from six sites: Austin, Texas; Englewood, NJ; Pasadena, CA; Shaker Heights, Ohio; Topeka, KS; and Charlotte, NC. Wells’ study spanned five years of data collection, beginning with a first stage that looked at historical documents such as yearbooks, school board minutes, newspaper articles, and legal documents. It also included interviews with policy makers, lawyers, and community members in the six districts. In the second stage, the researchers conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with forty to fifty students from a diversity of racial groups from each high school. In the third stage, second interviews were done with four to six of the graduates from each school. In total, the researchers conducted 268 graduate interviews (p. 44). The prevalent themes resulting from the study were first, "it is hard to live with white privilege and hard to live without it" (p. 112) which was strongly supported by graduates
of color, who saw attending white schools as giving them some access while taking away other comforts. Second, white students by and large valued their diverse school experience but believed that times had changed; families now needed to focus on achievement, and they stressed in their testimony to researchers that they were interested in sending their children to schools with high test scores. Finally, sports and extra-curricular activities were also the settings where the most true integration occurred, as students had a shared interest and goal that was best achieved by cooperation and teamwork. Wells’ study shows how parents have shifted their talk about their children’s education away from issues of race and on to issues of achievement. Wells did not include in her account, however, a greater analysis of how these parents choices to focus on achievement or test scores reproduced the same racial segregation of the previous generation with "color-blind" language. Her participants were, as mine were, reticent to talk about race. Wells interpreted this silence as a move away from focusing on integration rather than making choices that maintained racialized and classed spaces.

Researchers are not only interested in how desegregated schools impact a school environment, they are also concerned with the long-term impact on outlook and life choices of attending desegregated schools. The department of data and research in the Jefferson County School system in Louisville analyzed the impact of attending a desegregated school on the residential patterns of students in the future (Phillips, et al, 2009). In *Integrated Schools, Integrated Futures? A Case study of school desegregation in Jefferson County, Kentucky*, the researchers used district data about the 5,249
students in the class of 1997, cohort data about their schooling and residential patterns as children and a survey of graduates five years after graduation. Their study indicated that students who lived in racially heterogeneous neighborhoods as children were the most likely to reside in racially integrated neighborhoods as adults, and that the relative diversity of a student’s high school was a significant predictor of the student's choosing to live in a racially diverse neighborhood five years after high school graduation. In other words, students who attended more diverse high schools chose to live in racially diverse neighborhoods more often than students who attended racially homogenous high schools. Additionally, they found no significant effect on the socioeconomic condition of a neighborhood or high school on a student’s later choice to reside in a racially diverse neighborhood, indicating that economic integration does not equal racial integration.

Resisting Desegregation and Counter-Movements in the Literature

Despite a policy’s intention, there are actors on the ground who are tasked with enacting it. Their resistance – or counter-movements - can undo the policy's original intention. Years of counter-movements can result in a gradual unraveling of social justice aims. The racial integration of schools in the US was resisted on multiple levels, first at the wider level in city and state policy and, when that was ineffective, at a more nuanced level by parents and school officials.

Cottle's 1976 study of busing in Boston examined the many forms of resistance by families to a desegregation plan that moved students out of their neighborhoods in
an effort to create racially integrated schools. Cottle analyzed busing, not just from a racial perspective but from a class perspective as well, examining how the burdens of busing were borne by both working class and poor white and African American parents and largely escaped by upper class parents. One participant in his study described it thus:

There's always been rich folks making the laws - like where you can send your children to school - and poor folks obeying those laws. Busing is the same thing. Hypocritical rich folks pushing people around, saying, do like I say but not like I do. No surprises to this busing business. All you have to do is read your history, you'll find the same thing in every country...I'm not sure all of these government people would be pushing so hard for desegregating the schools. If it were their children riding these buses every morning, they'd play it different (Cottle, 1976, p. xi).

Cottle goes on to describe in his study how white working class people organized against busing: holding meetings, talking to officials and protesting. The testimony of white working class parents in the 1970's is blatantly racist in ways that are not seen in my participants; his participants were more focused on a solid white working class identity and did not disguise their class or race identity or pride. The participants eagerly described the busing plan in Boston as a plan made by the rich that did not impact the rich. There was less blame placed on African-American parents by white participants, with some participants stating that this was a plan that did not help African Americans either; it was merely a plan by the rich.
The blatant resistance by the white participants in Cottle’s Boston study were not the only forms of resistance to school desegregation. Ferri and Connor (2006) describe the counter-movements against Brown, stating that the court did not “adequately predict the multiple forms of resistance and reassertions of power that would emerge to keep general education and exclusive privilege for some, but not for all (p. 12).” Counter-movements against desegregation included firing African-American teachers, closing predominantly black schools, segregating black students into separate classrooms, and over-classifying African-American students as mentally retarded (Heaney and Uchitelle, 2004, Ferri and Connor, 2006; Dingus, 2006). Placing students in the same building was not a guarantee of an equal education.

Although students were integrated in school buildings, that has never guaranteed that students were in the same class or received the same education. In the earliest days of integration in St. Louis, black students would arrive by bus after the white students went to class, be educated in a separate wing, eat lunch at a different time and then board the buses after the white students had left (Heaney and Uchitelle, 2004). This type of explicit institutional separation within school buildings is ostensibly not found today in US schools, but the segregating effects of "color-blind" tracking by school officials still often creates segregated education within school buildings. In her 2006 study, “Integration Across Campus, Segregation Across Classrooms,” Wing (2006) examines how integration often does not offer the same experiences to all students, even when white students and students of color are attending the same school. Wing looked at the experiences of two Berkeley High School students, one high income white
student and one low income student of color, to look at how privilege can still operate to confer advantages to some and not to others. The differing advice given to the two students and their access to outside resources like private tutors, classes and counselors demonstrate how privilege reproduces itself even when schools are integrated. Wing reminds us that putting students in the same building is not the ultimate solution; work has to be done to integrate the students within the school to realize the opportunities created by integration. Although Wing’s study critiqued the marginalization of students of color on integrated campuses, she recognized the opportunities available when students shared the same resources in the same building. Wing points out that it is the responsibility of the teachers and administrators to make access possible, to make integration work for students, that in fact affirmative moves towards integrating students and seeing all students as learners and equal members of the community are key. The resistance to integration can come from many sources. Certainly, school officials and administrators undo the benefits of integration when they do not give access to all of the resources of the school to all students. Yet parents who ultimately decide where their child attends school can also undo the efforts to integrate schools in opting out of integrated schools.

Current Desegregation Plans: Busing and Not Busing Today

Since the late 1990’s, districts have both moved away from busing and embraced new different types of voluntary inter-district busing plans. California, Minneapolis and Connecticut have all adopted voluntary plans to bus students from high minority, low
income districts to surrounding suburban districts. At the same time, southern cities have been released from mandatory desegregation and returned to neighborhood schools or have adopted novel approaches to student assignment.

Clotfelter et al. (2008) evaluated the segregation data for North Carolina from 1994 to 2006. Their data, which detail the segregation indices, as well as the percentage of non-white students who attend racially isolated schools (schools that are 90-100% non-white), reveal patterns of resegregation in schools today. Upon being declared unitary or free from federal oversight, Charlotte-Mecklenburg and Raleigh–Wake County responded with divergent assignment plans. Charlotte-Mecklenburg instituted a plan ensuring that all parents could choose a neighborhood school, and Raleigh-Wake County instituted a plan stating that no school could exceed 40% of students on free and reduced lunch, or more than 25% of students below grade level. From 2000 to 2006, the percentage of non-white students in racially isolated schools increased from 7% to 39% in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, while the income sensitive plan in Raleigh-Wake County saw a dramatically lower percentage of minorities in racially isolated schools, with the percentage growing only from 1% to 2% over the same time period (Clotfelter, 2008). The study of the North Carolina case suggests that Jefferson County’s income based plan, which does not guarantee placement in a neighborhood school, will address the problem of segregation and prevent resegregation of African-American students into racially isolated schools, in the manner of Raleigh-Wake County. The stipulation that it use income in conjunction with racial characteristics further ensures that Jefferson County will not experience racial or economic resegregation.
Gerald Grant’s 2009 *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh* explores the successes of the Raleigh-Wake County school district in establishing and maintaining racially and economically integrated schools with above average achievement scores. He compares these successes with the disappointing reality of the Syracuse city school system, weaving his own personal stories in with statistics about the district and interview data and observations in Syracuse. Grant’s thesis is that the apartheid schooling in America creates a wall between those who have and those who have not, and that regardless of the amount of money we throw over that wall, the fundamental experience of the marginalized will not change as long as they are separated from those with economic and social resources. His qualitative data for the Raleigh school district and the Syracuse district indicate that assignment plans considering race and class to achieve integrated schools are more likely to see social mobility for marginalized students and less racial segregation. Grant firmly critiques the lack of a concerted integration plan in northern cities like Syracuse and explains his own position that this laissez faire approach reifies racial and class stratification and isolation.

Much of Grant’s work critiques the idea that money alone can alleviate the achievement gap. His assertion is supported by quantitative data revealing that class isolation does not always coincide with racial isolation. Reardon et al. (2006) found in their economic simulation model that policies which use income alone are highly unlikely to reduce racial segregation. Given the evidence from previous studies on school assignment plans- the use of income level, education level, and percentage of
minorities in an area to assign students from that area - will adequately address the problems of racially and socioeconomically segregated schools in Jefferson County. The school district did consider a neighborhood based assignment plan, and found that a guaranteed neighborhood resides plan would lead to racially and economically isolated schools (Jefferson County School District, 2010a). Furthermore, because the designation of neighborhoods is not based on race alone, it is not possible for the Jefferson County plan to merely achieve economic integration. Neighborhoods also must be high minority in order to be classified as an Area A neighborhood, one whose students are eligible to be transported to the higher income, low minority neighborhoods.

Research on other assignment plans also reveals the impacts of returning to neighborhood schools. In 1999, Nashville implemented a new assignment plan that returned students to neighborhood schools with a commitment to decrease bus rides. In a study of the results of this new assignment plan, Goldring and Cohen-Vogel (2006) found that neighborhood schools, or proximity to schools, do not increase or maintain structurally supportive communities. Additionally, when moving away from busing to desegregate to a neighborhood school assignment plan, African-American students are more likely to attend schools in high-risk neighborhoods.

Yet studies on busing plans are not limited to southern cities, Western and Northern cities have instituted busing plans as well. Ira Lit (2009) conducted a qualitative study of the Canford Program in California to examine the impacts of a voluntary busing plan on elementary students of color who were bused to affluent
majority white schools in neighboring school districts. Using participant observation with thirteen kindergarten students over a two year period and semi-structured interviews with parents, administrators, and teachers, and the intense shadowing of two students, Lit examined how students were treated in their destination school and how they experienced the school environment as students from outside the neighborhood. He worked with the kids every day in the classroom and even rode the bus with them to understand their day. The Canford program allows students of color from low income districts to transfer to nearby districts with greater resources. Because the Canford program was constructed as a result of de facto segregation, a mandated busing or student assignment could not be used, so the school districts in the area agreed to a voluntary busing program whereby they would accept a certain number of low income minority students from Canford. The researcher highlighted the fact that the receiving districts did not offer any regular training in including students from the Canford Program or information about why the district transfer program was maintained. These teachers lacked much of the sensitivity one would hope for from professional teachers, referring to the students as "the bus kids," and expressing disappointment when Canford students were placed in their classes. Although Lit’s study is a very detailed account of the difficulty the students encounter in the classroom, he does not offer a wider analysis of the types of difficulties they might encounter, if instead, they had stayed in an under-resourced, high poverty school. He does, however, describe in detail some of the issues that may be encountered by students of color who are bused outside their neighborhoods. He shows the exhaustion
related to the long bus rides of over an hour and the effects of often arriving late to school because of the bus, contrasting this with the experiences of neighborhood kindergarten children who have parents dropping them off to help them transition to the day. In talking about interactions between students, he describes that students of color who came on the bus were often on the fringe of social interactions and were not included in the play of the other students. Play dates did not happen between Canford students and neighborhood students, and birthday parties were often a problem. He did document that some neighborhood parents made a conscience effort to include the Canford students. But, in general, the Canford students made friends with each other, although they would often act out the racism they were hearing in their environment. He details the interactions between two African American children, Cherise and Callie - both in the Canford program. Callie says to Cerise, "I don't want to play with you - I don't play with black kids." Ira Lit concludes that there is not enough adult guidance or training in how to teach in multi-racial environments or how to help students develop an informed and balanced identity in a majority white environment. He describes how it is the responsibility of the children to manage the challenges of integration, quoting an administrator who says, "the successful Canford student is one who can walk in all worlds" (2009, p. 87). This administrator shows that the responsibility of the busing system rests on the student. Concluding his study with recommendations, Lit advocates for an apprenticeship model in which the onus is on the teacher to guide the student into the appropriate way of being in school. He says,
programs of school desegregation, whether voluntary or mandatory, are
designed as social engineering project. Typically schools pay most heed to
moving students from one place to another (desegregation), neglecting the
social and interactional aspects of schooling (integration) that may be at least
equally important to the success of the students (ibid, p. 170).

Although Lit offers important evidence of the difficulties students of color face
navigating a white middle class school, there is a danger that his study will be taken up
as a reason not to have programs like Canford rather than a compelling account about
how to do Canford better.

The voluntary transfer program in Minneapolis faced many of the same
challenges as the transfer program in Canford. The Minneapolis program, which was
created by an out-of-court settlement in 2000, allowed any student who was eligible for
free and reduced lunch to apply to transfer to one of eight suburban districts. This
"color-blind" remedy resulted in the voluntary transfer of 2,000 low income minority
students to suburban Minneapolis schools. Kraus's (2008) mixed methods analysis of
the results of the program indicate that parents are very happy with it and report that
their children are in a better learning environment after enrolling in the program.
However, Kraus cautions that the logistics of implementing the plan with families that
are housing insecure is difficult, with almost two thirds of the program's participants
dropping out. Kraus saw the voluntary nature of the program and the need to
maintain the paperwork difficult for many families.
A similar open choice program was instituted in Connecticut after *Sheff v. O’Neill* (1996) ruled that the racial and economic isolation of Hartford schools was a violation of the state constitution's guarantee of free and equitable education. The Open Choice program that resulted from the case allows students from the urban low performing areas of Hartford, Bridgeport, New London and New Haven to enroll in surrounding suburban districts. Holmes and Clark (2005) studied the transcripts of focus groups of parents, educators and middle and high school students. Students who participated in the program reported that academic excellence at their new school was the chief advantage of the program and lauded the high expectations of teachers and the engagement of students in their new school. The students in the focus group were reticent to mention race in the context of their discussions. When they were asked about the drawbacks of the program, however, most mentioned feeling left out. Parents of color in the focus groups were much more comfortable talking about race and readily brought up the topic, discussing the need for their children to receive a good education and to learn how to navigate white-dominated environments. Administrators in the focus groups also resisted talking about race in their discussions of the Open Choice program, preferring a "color-blind" approach in their conversations about the students. The feedback from these school officials was mixed; some administrators felt very committed to making the program work, while others expressed stereotyped or negative views of students or their parents. Overall, the researchers concluded that the students and parents felt that there was a great benefit to participating in the Open
Choice program and that their new schools afforded them options that they would not have in their home neighborhood.

**Parents Navigating Educational Choices in the Literature**

School choice in Louisville, Kentucky has largely existed in the public system through the magnet school program – a system designed to develop themed schools in urban areas to attract a diverse student body and to integrate schools through voluntary means. Although the magnet schools program provided a stable form of choice in the Jefferson county school system for over thirty years; policy makers, educators, and researchers outside of the education reform movement have criticized recent national calls for choice through charter schools as a tactic to undermine public education. The well-funded advocates for choice have argued that the market will produce the highest quality schools, and its strongest proponents favor the use of vouchers to pay for schooling.\(^\text{12}\) Harry Brighouse (2000) interrogates the binary opposition in school choice debates - to have or not have school choice - asserting that American middle-class families have long exercised school choice when they purchase a home. To Brighouse, it is not whether we want school choice in America but rather if we want to extend school choice to those who cannot afford it with their real estate purchases. Research suggests that parents often choose to enter or exit a particular school based on the “perceived

\(^{12}\) Using the free market for public school was first advocated in a 1955 article by Milton Friedman entitled “The Role of Government in Public Education.” Since this publication, using markets for public schooling has been a part of the platform of the Republican Party, first in the form of vouchers, and more recently through the establishment of charter schools. For a critique of using markets to improve schooling see Diane Ravitch’s *The Death and the Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
quality” of education their child is receiving (Bast, 2004; Hanushek et al., 2007).

However, high income parents have more choices than low income parents. Research on residential decision-making suggests that wealthy white parents base their decisions about where to buy a house on the racial composition of the schools, rather than on a visit to the school or an examination of the test data (Holme, 2002). Racially or economically marginalized parents act not only based upon their social location but also in response to how they are treated by the school and school officials in the choosing process (Bell, 2008; Bulman, 2004; Ndimande, 2008). Furthermore, low income families are less likely to use interdistrict choice to transfer to high income districts than high income families (Holme and Richards, 2009).

Public policy makers, business developers, and families manipulate the compositions of schools through their individual and collective decisions. Ndimande’s (2008) sociological study of the impact of the South African Schools Act, which gave vouchers to black families, reveals how difficult it is for choice to be equality driven when actors begin on an uneven playing field. His interviews with 122 black parents in South Africa aimed to understand the how and why of the choice process. Parents who sent their students to formerly white-only schools, as well as those who sent their children to black township schools were asked to speak about why they made the decision they did, and how they gathered information to make their decision. After discovering from these interviews that many poor parents were paying exorbitant school fees beyond the value of the voucher, Ndimande interviewed government officials to decipher the school fee policy. He learned that school fees should be waived
for low-income families, but that white schools often neglected to tell black families about this policy in order to dissuade them from enrolling. Ndimande's study details how the experiences of parents in a choice environment is often related to how those in power resist equity policies through deceit and the rationing of information.

Courtney Bell (2008) attended to the task of describing the experiences of parents in education decision-making in her article “Social Class Differences in School Choice: The Role of Preferences.” The results of her parental interviews in a Midwestern city with charter and magnet schools reveal that parents often made choices based upon how they were treated in schools. Working class parents who were treated negatively by their schools began to narrow their expectations and were less likely to try to find a good fit for their children. Middle class parents were more likely to challenge rejections or use connections to get their children into schools that fit their needs. Working class parents were more likely to treat a rejection as a final answer. Bell's sample consisted largely of people of color and poor and working class parents who revealed that choice was not a one-time decision, but rather an ongoing negotiation that often relied on how schools were reacting to them and to the students. By recognizing that decision-making about schools is not an exogenous event, but rather is closely aligned to what goes on within a school, Bell points to the “on-the-ground” issues that policy makers often gloss over.

While Ndimande and Bell focused on raced aspects of school choice in how parents were treated in their educational decision-making, Robert Bulman (2004) tried to divorce his study from the racial implications of school decision-making, saying that
he sought to explore decision-making among families occupying the middle socio-economic strata, living in school districts with average to good reputations" (p. 495). His interviews with the parents of 88 ninth graders reveal that parents made decisions about schooling largely based upon their past experiences with education and by their religious faith.

While Bulman ignored race as a central factor, Cooper(2004) made race and gender central components to her qualitative study of fourteen African American mothers. Cooper contends that African American mothers approach school choice from a position of "mother work" that is distinct from the approach of white mothers, in that it requires African American mothers to counteract racist assumptions that their children will encounter and provide them a set of tools to help them survive, empower and teach about their identity within white society. This type of survival and empowerment "mother work" shapes the school choices of African American mothers.

The researcher conducted two rounds of in-depth interviews with fourteen African American women of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in Los Angeles to look at how they made choices in the educational marketplace. The mothers in the study chose from the traditional public school, a charter school, a private Afro-centric school and a Catholic school. The mothers in the study prioritized academic success over all other considerations and focused on the inadequacies of the public schools as a reason to choose outside of the public arena. They were concerned with poor facilities and poor learning opportunities, as well as safety and discipline. Mothers who chose one of the two private schools cited academic rigor as the main reason to opt out of the public
education system and the option of a safe, well-disciplined school as a reason for choosing their private school. Charter school parents in the study demonstrated frustration with the school choice process and faced the most opposition in trying to enroll their children in a charter school, as school officials actively pressured them not to enroll in the charter. Meeting resistance from school officials activated their “mother work” initiative and encouraged them to be involved and to advocate for a spot in the school for their children.

Schneider and Buckley (2002) conclude, in their study of Washington D.C. schools, that an “unfettered introduction of choice can lead to increased segregation, and perhaps even less pressure on schools to improve” (p. 133). Their study involved looking at the research patterns of parents who accessed an internet resource on schools in the Washington DC area. The researchers tracked the sections of the website that parents visited to determine which data they were most concerned with in learning about a school. They assumed that the sections of the websites that parents visited early in the research process were the items of highest importance to them based upon multiple theories of decision-making. The area of the web site most often visited by parents (almost 30%) was the “student body” section of the site, which described the demographics (race and class as measured by free and reduced lunch status) of the students at the schools; the second highest category was location. This research area was searched more often by higher educated parents than by less educated parents. The second important finding from Schneider and Buckley’s study was that parents had already eliminated the most “poorly performing” schools from
their research prior to visiting the web site, as these schools' profiles were not visited as often as other school profiles, demonstrating that parents care about academic quality and come to the search process with a priori knowledge of the academic reputation of some schools. However, as the parent research continues, parents tend to view school profiles with higher percentage of black students less and less, while the school profiles of low-performing schools are visited at the same rate. Furthermore, although parents will not state on surveys that they are looking for schools with fewer black students, the research process demonstrates that they are seeking such schools.

Koedel et al. (2009) looked at three school choice programs in San Diego to determine the integrating and segregating effects of school choice. The researchers analyzed the applications of three school choice programs in the San Diego City School district. The analysis reveals that applicants to all three choice programs choose schools that have a higher percentage of white students than their current school. Therefore when the program is used by students of color, the programs result in more integrated school environments. However, the white students in the study also choose schools with more white students, thereby increasing segregation when they enroll in the program. Because one of the Choice programs in the San Diego school district requires students to provide their own transportation, the result is that its applicants tend to be white. Therefore, this program in particular has segregating effects. The other two programs provide transportation, so the results of these two programs are integrative.

13 The researchers did not mention whether it was possible that parents already knew the racial demographics of these schools or neighborhoods rather than knowing their test data.
as more students of color are able to move to schools with a greater percentage of white students.

Welsch, Statz and Skidmore (2010) looked at the factors leading to school transfer in parents using the inter-district transfer program in Wisconsin to determine what makes parents/students leave a school and which characteristics exist in the chosen schools. This quantitative study used an econometric model to determine the correlation of certain characteristics (percentage of students at each academic level, population density, percentage of minorities, number of extracurricular activities, average experience of teachers, property value in the district, etc), with the number of transfers to a district and the number of applications to a district. Using the results of their regression analysis, Welsh et al. (2010) concluded that parents are attracted to school districts that are high achieving, high spending and with a low percentage of minorities. The families seeking to transfer out of school districts are coming from ones where there are high property values but low tax rates and a relatively small number of extracurricular activities. This study did not look at why parents chose these particular attributes, but rather at the characteristics of the schools that parents chose and the characteristics of the schools that parents chose to leave. Overall, expenditure per student in the receiving district was the variable with the largest magnitude in the school choice process, indicating that parents were seeking districts that had financial resources.

Bifulco et al (2009) looked at data on elementary and middle school students in Durham, North Carolina, in the 2002-2003 school year to determine how school choice
would impact racial segregation. The three hypotheses tested in this quantitative study were 1) white parents and those from socially advantaged groups will avoid schools with large numbers of black or disadvantaged students; 2) black and disadvantaged students will be more likely to use choice to make integrative school choices; 3) the result will be an increase in segregation by race and class compared to geographic assignment policies. The results of their regression model concluded that the net result of choice was increased segregation by race and class, with both white and black choosers chose schools that had greater concentrations of their own racial group than the assigned school.

The studies on school choice indicate that parents make decisions based upon the race and class of schools and their own race and class. Furthermore, the research indicates that parents are reticent to admit to researchers that this is the aspect of a school they are interested in discovering. Parents do not talk about race as a deciding factor or indicate that they are concerned with race, however, their search patterns on research sites indicate that early in the research process they look at the racial composition of schools and subsequently narrow their school list to those schools that match their own race. Furthermore, when parents choose schools they choose schools that are more reflective of their own race than the school to which they were previously assigned. In looking at the choices parents make and the types of research they conduct, it is clear that race and class does matter to parents in making school choices, despite their statements to researchers.
Conclusion

The body of literature on desegregation, diversity, and parental decision-making does not point to clear answers about how to design a school assignment plan, or how parents will move with or against any given plan. The particularities of each location, and its history with segregation and desegregation, matter in the ultimate choices of parents. These decisions do not happen in a vacuum; each parent comes to choices in schooling and housing from a particular place and a particular goal for their child. Yet the literature on the benefits of racial diversity indicates that parents' choices may not result in the outcomes most beneficial to society. Economic and racial integration has been shown to increase mutual understanding and academic achievement, but parents often choose against these goods and isolate their children from diverse environments. What they perceive as the best choice for their individual child causes the whole to suffer.

In this dissertation, I aim to uncover how parents both resist and support integrated schooling and how they connect these moves to their own understanding of their school and residential choices as “natural.” I look at how parents use race-neutral language to describe choices that have raced effects and how white parents with privilege take time to distance themselves from overt racism, and how black parents of privilege take time to minimize racism. I hope to illuminate how a language of achievement is used to reproduce choices that have segregating effects and add to the body of literature an account of how particular parents in a specific time and location
understand their own position in society and make choices regarding schools from that particular location.
Chapter Three: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A Qualitative Case Study of Parents Choosing Schools

This qualitative case-study of school choice and assignment in Louisville is based upon research conducted over a three year period and seeks to understand how parents make decisions about schools. Mindful of the importance of identity and cultural and historical context, I interviewed a diverse set of primarily middle class parents in the Louisville area to understand how they articulated their experience of the school choice process. I aimed to understand the parent’s history with schooling, how they viewed their choices, when they began to think about schools for their children, and how housing decisions interacted with these choices. In this chapter, I explain my methodology, qualitative case study, and its position in the field of social science, the methods by which I collected my data, and my positionality as a researcher in relation to the study participants and the research topic.

Qualitative Case Study

The qualitative case-study attempts to do an in-depth analysis of a particular social phenomenon in order to increase human understanding. There are different ideas about the nature of case study, but the first defining feature that most researchers agree on is that case studies are projects describing bounded systems (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Ragin and Becker, 1992; Stake, 1995; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Eisenhardt (1989) describes case study as “understanding the dynamics present in a single setting” (p. 534). Although many researchers disagree about which types of data to use in case studies, most agree that case study relies on multiple types of data-
survey results, interview data, observations in the field – and can be qualitative or quantitative in nature. This dissertation uses multiple sources of data to study a bounded system - school choices within the Louisville metropolitan area - and will rely on qualitative sources for the primary analysis.

With much of the focus in research circles and funding agencies on experimental and statistical analysis of large data sets, why investigate a case qualitatively? Feagen et al. (1991) states that the advantage of qualitative case study is its holistic nature, which allows it to be closer to the real-life experiences of people:

Rather than assuming a world of simplicity and uniformity, those who adopt the qualitative approach generally picture a world of complexity and plurality. It is the richness and subtle nuances of the social world that matter and the qualitative researcher wishes to uncover. Thus, instead of adopting a set of standardized questions and categories with which to characterize- indeed, one can even say, to construct-social action, the qualitative researcher wishes to permit as much flexibility into the judgments made about the world as possible. (p. 23)

The qualitative case study, then, is flexible and inductive. It hopes to find a way to learn from the experiences of subjects, and it aims to come closer to real life experiences because it is not an abstraction of experience but rather a dynamic portrait of experience. Case studies rely on the logic of contextual experience, that subjects live in their social world in a particular time and location and through a particular identity.
Intense focus on a bounded system of experiences allows the researcher to uncover meanings, histories, and cultures that are specific to region and place. The case study allows one to examine the multitude of factors that come into play in human decision-making and the construction of social worlds.

Jennifer Platt (1992) traced the use of the term “case study” in methods textbooks and journal articles, describing how historical events and trends in the qualitative/quantitative debate and social theory intersect with the prevalence and acceptance of case study methodology. The origin of case study, according to Platt, is in the field of social work which became popular in the 1920’s and 1930’s in the United States. Much of the data used in case study research was from social work records. Many of the articles in the Journal of Social Forces in the 1920’s and 1930’s detailed how sociologists could use social work records for their research (Platt, 1992, p. 20). The early work utilizing case study methodology was instigated by the Chicago School of Sociology, which was interested in using inductive methods to elicit personal meanings from the testimony of research participants. Platt goes on to describe how case study largely disappeared from American textbooks and articles at the beginning of World War II, as the United States began using the war department to begin large-scale studies of social problems. Academics and young scholars were recruited by the various research branches of the US government to employ social research to manipulate public opinion to support the war and provide feedback on the American condition (Platt, 1992, p. 35). The focus in this era was on quantifying qualitative data, attitude surveys, and survey methodology. After the war, survey methodology predominated until at
least the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, when the second wave of the Chicago School of Sociology revived interest in qualitative work and case study (Platt, 1992, p. 39 and 41). This is not to say that there were not case studies done between the 1930’s and 1970, but rather that it was much less prevalent in textbooks, published studies and journal articles. Platt does point to Howard Becker’s studies as an exception to this trend, and as a major figure in the revival of interest in participant observation and qualitative case study. Becker suggests that his writing on participant observation and qualitative methodology was in part writing against his minority status in the field (Platt, 1992, p. 42). Platt (1992) points to the 1980’s as the time when qualitative case study methodology prevailed in textbook publications and journal articles (p. 42-43). Her review of the literature of the 1980’s demonstrates that case-study has been used in divergent ways, and at times has been used interchangeably with participant observation and qualitative research. Platt concludes her history with a call for greater clarity on the nature of case study and a firmer definition of the enterprise.

Robert Stake (1995) and Sharan B. Merriam (1998) have attempted to define and prescribe the nature and logic of case study. Stake (1995) has classified case studies into three distinct types: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (p. 2-4). Intrinsic case studies are those that are directed by an internal desire to understand the phenomena occurring in a bounded system in order to improve internal practice. These types of case studies can be performed by researchers or practioners in the bounded system or by outside agencies hired for program evaluation. Researchers conducting an intrinsic case study do not attempt to gain a general understanding of best practice to be applied
in other contexts, but rather aim to improve the work inside their agency or institution.

Instrumental case studies are those that look at the particulars of one case in order to illuminate the processes by which agents or institutions respond to policy, context, or particular social phenomena. The instrumental case study looks at the particular experience in hopes of bringing an understanding of the general.

Collective case studies are also instrumental in that they aim to achieve understanding of a phenomenon greater than the participant’s individual experience, but collective case studies involve multiple representatives of the question under study. The example that Stake uses of a collective case study involves the understanding of how a school reform plan is being implemented in a school district. The researchers chose six schools to study, each one contributing to the diversity of the sample, so that the in-depth case work would show how a diverse set of schools responds to the implementation of one particular school reform plan (Stake, 1995, p. 5). Sharan Merriam (1998) in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* posits that case study achieves particularistic, descriptive and heuristic accomplishments. The particularistic aspect of case study overlaps with Stake’s intrinsic case study – the ability to focus on a specific problem or situation in an agency. Particularistic actions are “problem centered, small scale, and entrepreneurial endeavors” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The descriptive action of case study involves the holistic “thick descriptions” of the “institute or entity being investigated” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The descriptive nature of case studies is similar to Stake’s instrumental but refrain from making the broader generalizations of theory that Stake reports about instrumental case study. Yet
Merriam maintains that the final accomplishment of case study is heuristic, in that it can evaluate, summarize and conclude – that it aims to discover new meaning and to explain why a policy worked or failed (p. 31). Merriam is interested in the ways in which case study can “directly influence policy, practice, and future research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). The logic in case study is the way it allows the researcher the opportunity to experience the policy, situation or problem with the subjects most impacted by the intervention. “The advantage of the case study is that it can close in on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 428).

Merriam’s heuristic case study does not shy away from explaining how policy works and does not work, and this is the type of study that this dissertation attempts to be – a qualitative analysis of a bounded system that is operating under a public policy that has real and concrete impacts on the actions of parents; parents who are raising children and buying houses, parents who are making financial and life-changing decisions about how they will interact with this policy. The decisions they make are informed by their experiences, and the qualitative interview was chosen to uncover the details of these decisions because of its ability to detect nuance.

**Using Qualitative Methods in Case Studies: What is Evidence – and when is it compelling?**

The task for a researcher, very often, is to determine which of the many true statements that can be made about a situation are relevant (not to mention, of course, that the researcher also has to determine as far as is possible what statements *are* true about it). (Phillips and Burbules 2000, 38)
In research, data are the evidence the investigator uses to support or define the truth of a particular event or situation. When we look for evidence, we are looking for support for claims to truth. The problem with truth, or determining which statements or evidence are true, is that truth can be different to different people depending on their location. Consider a geographic example: imagine two people observing the dome in the US capitol, one person is inside the capitol looking up, and the other is on the edge of the capitol lawn looking at the outside. They are both looking at the capitol, but they are observing from a different location and therefore will describe the building differently. They may have thick descriptions with detail and measurement, defining colors, shapes and textures; they may present their evidence in convincing pictures, descriptive text, drawings, or films. Yet what they describe will be quite different. The inside of the capitol dome differs from the outside, so therefore the position of the subject in relation to the object of study is crucial to their understanding the nature and reality of the capitol. Truth is multiple. Multiple truths about objects, interventions, and policies exist, and these multiple truths likely derive from the positionality of the subject. No doubt, in the thick description of the capitol dome, the subjects will allude to their location, and in this allusion the existence of multiple truths will be revealed.

Andrew Davis (2006), in his essay, “Consistency, Understanding, and Truth in Educational Research,” explores how truth can be inconsistent in qualitative research, and posits that this inconsistency may be the illuminating factor in discovering the terrain of the social world. He says, “the thick descriptions to be found in some ethnographic research and the narratives offered about classroom events capture
aspects of the relevant phenomena in such a way that sometimes more than one ‘story’
seems appropriate and even ‘true’ (Davis, 2006, p. 492). For me, the thick descriptions
found in qualitative data allow the researcher to see the true level of inconsistency
present in most social situations. In “Refusing Alternatives: A Science of Contestation,”
Elizabeth St. Pierre (2008) challenges the National Research Council’s focus on
consensus, stating that these as foundational goals of educational research, are
dangerous to the marginal voices in a pluralistic society. She refers to this pressure as a
“dialectical violence of consensus” (p. 136) and sees the benefit of qualitative research
as the way in which the researcher is allowed to see the inconsistencies, and thereby
challenge those inconsistencies in a way that will speak to a broader truth – one that
incorporates the view of those inside the dome as well as those outside.

By incorporating multiple viewpoints into my study, I tasked myself with interpreting
testimony, observations, and documents to illuminate the social situation or policy
problem in an “objective” manner. I interpret objectivity in line with Eisner (1992) who
wrote; “objectivity means on some contexts being fair, open to all sides of the
argument” (p. 9). The interpretation of the data is where the identity of the researcher
enters the equation. In looking at testimony or narrative accounts, the researcher
observes the positionality of the subject and attempts to build consensus by gaining
more testimony from more varied participants. We do not expect our participants to be
objective; in fact we expect them not to be objective, yet when it comes to our
interpretations we seek to be balanced and open to new ideas and theories not yet
constructed. When we look at transcripts of research participants, there is room to use
our biases to draw out particular themes based on our viewpoint or social location.

Certainly the data that a researcher chooses to include or exclude could reflect his/her preconceived notions about the topic. In fact, qualitative researchers are often accused of finding the data that support their previously held theory. However, I would argue that “objective” truths come out of the negotiations of data and researcher identity, and that we can, if open to the data we gather and cognizant of how we are situated in relation to the data, find a story that incorporates varied perspectives and draws conclusions about the processes that occur in the social world. From a research perspective, we must take the testimony of our participants as one piece of the data set and supplement it with other accounts, observations, document analyses, and yes, theory to gain an understanding of the social. Some understanding of truth can be obtained by interview data from multiple participants and use of other sources to verify that data. Therefore, “belief supported by good reasons is a reasonable and realistic aim for inquiry. The reasons...are judged good not by a correspondence we cannot determine, but by the exercise of reason. What we believe, in the end, is what we ourselves create” (Eisner, 1992, p. 15). All testimony is not equal. Our task is to determine whether testimony represents a broader reality of the situation, or a construction of events to justify a personal bias, or both. By using multiple forms of data and varied types of participants, I hope to uncover the ways participants construct, resist, and reproduce privilege in their testimony.

Donald Campbell (1975) originally rejected the use of qualitative case study as a methodology that lacked rigor exactly because the testimony of both the participants
and the researcher may be tainted by prejudice, bias or purposeful manipulation for individual gain; yet in later writings he came to believe that the rigor and experimental nature of social statistics was just as apt to be abstracted and manipulated as any qualitative case study (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 421). He is not alone in his original criticism of qualitative case-study, many social scientists point to tests of rigor and generalizability as arguments against employing this method (Thomas, 2010, p. 576). In all of Campbell’s later discussions of the evidence used in case studies, he insists that the knowledge gained from the particular lived experience of subjects will allow us insight into the social. He cautions that “this is not to say that such common-sense naturalistic observation is objective, dependable, or unbiased. But it is all that we have. It is the only route to knowledge – noisy, fallible, and biased though it may be” (Campbell, 1975, p. 191). Campbell understood that observation and testimony were biased, yet he also understood that numbers as abstract representations of human experience are also fallible and biased. As Biklen (2010) states, “evidence...is not value neutral” (p.3). The testimony that we gather, what we choose to look at and how we ask questions, quantitatively or qualitatively will be influenced by the perspective of the researcher and his/her predilections. If we know that evidence is not value neutral, what kind of evidence should we gather, when do we know that we have enough, and what conclusions can we draw from our evidence?

Researchers in the qualitative tradition aim to provide “thick description-oriented case study research” (Donmoyer and Galloway, 2010, p. 24). Thick description, a term coined by Clifford Geertz (1973), is the task of the ethnographer to provide an
account of the daily lives of subjects in a manner which not only describes the action but also the context and purpose for that action, as well as the impact that action has on others. The ethnographer attempts to describe “the piled up structures of inference and implication” (Geertz, 1973, p. 4). This “thick-description” allows the researcher and the consumer of the research to gain understanding and insight into the social world inhabited by the subjects.

In addition to thick description, qualitative case study “rejects the hierarchy of credibility” by learning from subjects rather than relying on professional knowledge to gain insight (Biklen, 2010, p. 11). The researcher in the qualitative case study looks for evidence from observing the setting, reading the texts that subjects read, watching the media subjects watch, paying attention to what people are talking about, and recording how they talk about what is important to them. In qualitative case study, the evidence is the material of everyday lives, observed holistically and in context. It does not separate out the mundane necessities of daily activities that shape decisions, or ignore variables that were not considered prior to work in the field. It allows the subjects to speak and act out their experiences so that the researcher can gain meaning about the social life in a bounded system. By reading the newspapers and blogs that parents read, by attending the tours and open houses that they attend, I have aimed in this research to not only hear my participants but to also observe their settings and context.

Qualitative case study does not attempt to find a representative sample, but rather a diverse or varied sample so that different types are represented (Stake, 1995, p.
The idea of variety is important in thinking about how different subjects may respond or react to change or interventions differently. It is not necessary to have a specific number of cases related to the sample size, and often choosing very large samples for qualitative research does not add information, while it has the additional danger of making the quality of information gathered less descriptive and in-depth. The qualitative researcher interviews until no new data emerges from the sample, when the experiences of participants begin to repeat themselves. Therefore, in this case study I have chosen, 23 participants who can give me varied accounts of the school choice process. As I gathered participants, I constantly aimed to add new members who could offer new perspectives.

**Theory Found in Case Study: Grand vs. Grounded**

Case study research is not particularly suited to producing grand theories of society. And when I say grand, I am invoking the types of theories employed by Talcott Parsons, Thomas Luckman, Habermas or Marx, theorists who purported to have an understanding of the internal logic of all society (Seidman, 2008). Talcott Parsons and Karl Marx produced theory that moved across time and space and offered an all encompassing vision of the order of society. “In Parsons, theory is intended to be cut loose from its moral and political moorings; whatever moral vision animated them, it was buried beneath layers of morally purged vocabularies, muted by the dogma of value-neutrality, objectivity, general theory, and social knowledge” (Seidman, 2008, p. 73). These grand theorists hoped to elevate social explanations to an academic formula of predictable social structure.
Grand Theory was first soundly critiqued in C. Wright Mills’ (1959), *The Sociological Imagination*, in which he challenged sociologists to infuse social science with the wonder of human imaginings and possibilities, and attempted to relegate grand theory to the pages of history (Skinner, 1994). He resisted the grand theorists who are “concerned with a rather static and abstract view of the components of social structure on quite a high level of generality” (Mills, 1959, p. 23). He further elaborated how this abstract view occurs: “the vehicle of their abdication is pretentious over-elaboration of ‘method’ and ‘theory;’ the main reason for it is their lack of firm connection with substantive problems” (Mills, 1959, p. 75). Mills’ rather disdainful account of grand theorists includes the accusation that had true intellectual competition been waged, “grand theory...would be something that young academic men go through” (Mills, 1959, p. 75).

Let me be clear here in that I do not mean to suggest that case-study research is an inferior cousin to other types of research in producing grand theory. Instead I would like to suggest that grand theory can perhaps not develop from any type of social science research. Our social worlds are too ephemeral, too context-dependent for any all-encompassing theory to work across time and space.

Flyvberg (2004) makes an even stronger statement about social science in general: “there does not and probably cannot exist predictive theory in social science. Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and has thus in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge” (p. 422). Case study does not hide from its location in time and space, it
recognizes that meaning-making, processes, identities, and choices are historically and geographically dependent. The particular trajectory of one place depends on the identities (cultural and relational) of the greater society. The implication of a given policy in one time and space is not the same as the same policy in another time and place. “The case study aims to generate or test a theory in its particular social, cultural, and historical context” (Lee et al, 2010, p. 682). Grounded theory, in its ability to consider, derive meaning from, and offer explanation for the local, is the type of theory generated from case-study investigations. “Inductive case studies are considered similar to grounded theory approaches whereby hypotheses emerge from the data and, therefore, contribute to emerging knowledge and to theory building” (Lee et al, 2010, p. 684). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed grounded theory as a way in which to explain and examine how sociologists could learn from the data they were collecting as they were collecting it. They were concerned with a social science method which aimed to prove or disprove an already formulated hypothesis. In their seminal text, they define grounded theory as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” in contrast to “theory generated by logical deduction from a priori assumptions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2-3). One of the principle ideas of grounded theory is that all knowledge does not reside in the researcher, nor that the subject of research is out there waiting for an explanation or theory of his/her everyday life. Instead, grounded theory rests upon the idea that expertise lies in the field, in the minds and bodies of everyday actors who know their social world far better than any outside researcher can. This is not to say that researchers do not have something to add by
doing their analysis, but rather that knowledge does not have a sole location. The
time that comes from this explanation derives from the subjects themselves rather
than being placed upon them.

Qualitative research is capable of representing social processes. One of its most
significant strengths is that it can elicit what people take for granted and frame
perspectives within context. It studies well the logic of people’s views. And it
beautifully addresses the complexity of lives, situations and institutions, and
therefore, unlike approaches that work to simplify environments, it is useful for
actual policy development. (Biklen, 2010, p. 10)

The qualitative researcher, in developing theory pays attention to the multiple
ways subjects present and represent themselves, its fluidity and focus allows it to be
“attentive to the systematic exclusions produced by the assumptions and practices of a
normalized social science” and instead

requires attention to what is not seen, but is nonetheless powerfully real;
requires attention to what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive,
requires attention to what appears to be in the past, but is nonetheless
powerfully present: requires attention to just who the subject of analysis is.

(Gordon, 1997, p. 42)

This ability to capture the absent present in the field is what allows qualitative case-
study to be a theory-producing exercise. Qualitative research from the grounded-theory
tradition places the scientific method on its head by insisting that the production of a
hypothesis before going into the field unravels the very intent of extracting meaning from the everyday lives of people. Eisenhardt (1989) says of the scientific process and qualitative research:

theory-building research is begun as close as possible to the ideal of no theory under consideration and no hypotheses to test. Admittedly, it is impossible to achieve this ideal of a clean theoretical slate. Nonetheless, attempting to approach this ideal is important because preordained theoretical perspectives or propositions may bias and limit the findings. Thus, investigators should formulate a research problem and possibly specify some potentially important variables, with some reference to extant literature. However, they should avoid thinking about specific relationships between variables and theories as much as possible. (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 536)

Theory that is produced from qualitative case study is theory that comes from the participants, it is theory that bubbles up rather than being imposed. Furthermore, it is first and foremost theory that is applicable mainly to the time and place studied, although it certainly can be carefully applied to similar locations and events.

A comprehensive busing plan of some nature has existed in Louisville for thirty-five years, and the locally raised parents of school children in Louisville today were either bused by this plan, or avoided the plan by seeking educational options outside of the district. Parents who have moved to Louisville as adults are bringing their own schooling experiences to their decision-making. The experience of parents who live in Louisville is particular to time and location. This is not to say that their experiences
cannot be translated to parents in other locations, but that there are particularities of this time and space that make a case-study particularly appropriate. My social location in time and space and in relation to Louisville makes a difference in how I make meaning in my research and how my participants make meaning of me. As I embarked on this study, it was imperative for me to examine how my identity would interact with the identities of my interview participants.

Social Location and Rapport

When I originally considered writing about my social location for this dissertation, I was convinced that I was going to write about the challenges of building rapport when both the researcher and the participants are white and the conversation centers on race or on the struggle of a white researcher when talking with a black participant about race. However, as my interviews and analysis developed, rapport became, foremost, an issue of geography. Rapport was troubled by a difference and a similarity that could be disclosed but not seen. It was invisible to the eye but perhaps not the ear.

“Why Kentucky?” they would ask, when I mentioned my northern university.

“Why did you come down here?”

“You want to study us because of our court case, right?”

In conducting my interviews, I was initially read by my participants as a northerner because of my speech. African-American and White participants alike, were skeptical about my intentions, and defensive about their city and state. However, as soon as I added a bit of local knowledge to the conversation, or claimed Kentucky as my home, I
would see the shoulders relax a bit and the corners of the mouth turn up in a slight smile.

One way certain qualitative researchers ensure that the data they get is “good” is often overlooked – that they inevitably come to care deeply about what and whom they are studying (Toma, 2000, p. 177).

Southern expatriates often talk about losing their accent, learning to restrict the jaw and mouth, tightening the lips around vowels, deliberately achieving the pursed controlled speech of a housewife from Greenwich, Connecticut. I remember one southern ex-pat who said she spent about six months trying to decide whether to adopt a northeastern accent or a British one. She figured that if she was going to invest the time in adopting a new dialect, she might as well select the one that offered the most epistemic privilege. Our obsession with the perception of southern speech is not unfounded. Research on the perceptions of dialects demonstrates a pervasive and enduring stereotype of the intellectually deficient and racist southerner.

In a qualitative study on undergraduates at Amherst College, Elizabeth Aries (2008) found that the southern stereotype was consistent in testimony from southern undergraduates.

Marie, a lower-income white from an Appalachian state, recalled another student's assumption that she came from a poor community where people were ‘just kind of dumb low-life’s. I remember one person in a class talking about (my home state) and saying ‘I mean isn't it like a third world country? They don't
even have hospitals.’ ‘One girl in the beginning of the year found out that I was from a (southern state),’ reported Amy, a lower income white, ‘she immediately thought I was a hillbilly (Aries, 2008, p 112)

In social psychology research, the stereotypes about southerners persist in their application to intelligence and competence. In a study by Fiske et al, participants consistently ranked northerners as being more competent than southerners (Fiske et al, 2002). In qualitative work done on teacher perceptions of dialect, Hunter O’Hara found that pre-service teachers held distinct views about regions of the country, and that southern accents denoted incompetence (O’Hara, 2005). In-service teachers also explored in their diaries how accents impacted their views of students and indicated that students with stronger southern accents were viewed as less competent than students with a neutral or northern accent. The media, as well, rely on the southern stereotype to create headlines such as those used in the 2007 Jena, Louisiana case, “Stealth racism stalks deep South” (Mangold, 2007), “Racism goes on Trial Again in Deep South” (Mangold, 2007), and “Old-Fashioned Southern Justice in the Modern South” (Williams, 2007). Because the reader has an historical and popular image of the southern racist, a headline that triggers that image is simple to digest. It is easy to understand the story’s conclusion, because the story has been told before.

Judith Butler’s work on constructed identities posits that we are subject to an identity that has been constructed to serve the particular needs of a normative power structure (Butler, 1990) How we perform that identity functions within a system built
upon historical experiences, cultural practices and maintenance of existing power relations (Jackson, 2004). So the question to ask oneself when considering the southern stereotype is, “who benefits from the maintenance of this image?” (Butler, 1997) What work does holding on to the racist and incompetent southerner accomplish? Why does it matter if people assume that southerners are incompetent or racist? Why did I need to process the perception of southern dialects in order to build rapport and ultimately write about my data?

Giving racism a geographic location is dangerous. If we know where to find racism – if it exists only in the area bounded by the Mason-Dixon Line, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic Ocean - then realities go missing in the rest of the country.

Matthew D. Lassiter, a historian at the University of Michigan, deconstructs the “southern strategy” and claims that the modern day Republican voting bloc of the South had more to do with a growing middle class and a de-industrialized north than with the white supremacy journalists are constantly ascribing to it. Lassiter (2010) states that:

the most insightful observers of southern history have always insisted that the region is inseparable from the nation, that the south is not the antithesis of a progressive America but, rather, has operated as a mirror that reveals its fundamental values and practices.....the South has been an American problem because it became the repository for problems that were really “American” all along and that were only thought to be peculiar to the region and antithetical to mainstream American values (p. 9)
A geographic positioning of racism reifies white supremacy. It allows racism to go unchecked outside the American South, and allows northern racism to be explained as some other “race-neutral” offense. Lassiter has coined his uncovering of the southern stereotype, "The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism," which he defines as a prevailing notion in American society that the South is set apart, as particularly racist in an otherwise egalitarian country, and as particularly conservative in an otherwise progressive country. What I would like to suggest is that his myth works hand in hand with a Myth of Northern Enlightenment, which positions the north as a place of racial utopia and progressive idealism. This myth excuses northern cities and peoples from recognizing and dealing with the structural racism that exists and persists. It allows northerners to dismiss solutions used in the south and creates judicial distinctions, such as de facto and de jure segregation, which implicate the south and exonerate the north.

Let me be clear here: I am not saying that southern society is not racist. I am saying that southern society is no more and no less racist than northern society. Much like Audre Lorde’s (1983) oft-repeated, “there is no hierarchy of oppression,” in the same way, there is no hierarchy of white supremacy either. Supremacy is built into the structure of our institutions and has real effects in the north and the south. Only by believing that racism has a distinct location will we miss the pervasive effects of its existence. I would like to suggest that locating racism in the south is in fact one of the ways institutions structure racism in order for it to survive. It dislocates people’s experience. A person of color in the north who experiences racism internalizes and excuses: “at least I don’t live
in the South – imagine how bad it would be there.” A white person dismisses the inequity in northern segregated schools - “it is not like in the South where they had a law that African-Americans could not go to white schools; African – Americans go to their own schools here because they want to.”

“Prescription for researchers indicate that fieldworkers should be unobtrusive, honest, unassuming, self-revealing, and reflective listeners” (Bogdewic, 1991). Bodewic offers an explanation of how we should listen but not how we should talk. Can I turn on my accent to build rapport – is the strategic use of cadence helpful or even possible? Is it ethical?

What does it mean for rapport with my participants if we are each openly and actively engaged in battling stereotypes of geography? How does my own momentary struggle with an accent stronger than my own impact the interaction I have with my participant? What does it mean that I can name this judgment, know where it came from, and then actively fight against it? What assumptions do my participants hold about me and my position? How might my position be complicated or assisted by my origins in the south?

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) assert that qualitative researchers should be engaged in “distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, and trust-building” processes with their participants (p. 94). After years of listening to Northerners deride Southerners, I wonder how a northern researcher could conduct a distance-reducing process with a southern participant. Somehow these myths make the Mason-Dixon line seem impossibly wide.
“Qualitative researchers must initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with a participant in order to build a research relationship that will allow the researcher access to that person’s story” (Dickson-Swift et al, 2007, pp331). First encounters are important to building rapport, so I deliberately looked for events where I could meet participants in person. At the beginning of October I did a participant observation at the Showcase of Schools in Louisville - an informational fair about school options in the public school district. I introduced myself to parents, teachers, and principals. “I am a researcher from Syracuse University,” and just as their body would tense up and their smile would disappear, I would add, “and I have come home to do my dissertation research.” Mentioning home in relation to Louisville brought us closer together, and for most people moved the conversation to the next step, anxiety-quieting. This conversation would usually involve questions about what I had in mind in studying Louisville, and my impressions and opinions of the desegregation plan and busing in general. Trust-building was not accomplished in this brief introduction, but meeting the participants in person, defining my allegiance to home and being open and honest about my eagerness to learn from the Louisville experience created a foundation for trust in the interview process. I felt my old accent growing in strength and prominence as I spoke with more people.

“Only those researchers emerging from the life worlds of their ‘subjects’ can be adequate interpreters of such experience” (Stanfield, 1994). In an interview with one of the original lawyers in the 1975 desegregation case, the participant took great care to position himself as anti-racist. My initial read of this conversation and others was that
my participants were seeking to distance themselves from racism – I read it as white talk - and interpreted it in a reductive lens which privileged race as the sole identity operating in the conversation. As I have re-read the transcripts the positioning reveals more to me about geography than race – a talking against the myth of southern exceptionalism. Geographic identity is present more than racial identity; he is talking against my northern university, my northern inflection – the myth of northern enlightenment. When I ask him why Louisville did not stop desegregation by busing when other districts nationwide were seeking releases from court orders, he replied:

the reason I think that it didn’t happen is just plain decent people doing what they thought was right rather than what they could get away with. Because it is undoubtedly better for the community, especially from an educational point of view. At least my liberal self believes that. In fact, I even told them that we could not represent them at one point because there was going to be a dispute (about the plan)….we did not want to stop busing because we felt that the schools would re-segregate and quickly (Interview, Law Clerk, 2010).

At this point in the interview, I share the research on those other districts with him – that districts declared unitary have re-segregated and that the most segregated cities in America are in the north. He smiles as he hears me talking against the myth of northern enlightenment ... our rapport is building. We then have this exchange:

Researcher: Of course, most people in the North don’t know they live in the most segregated area in America.
L: Be sure to remind them that slavery started in the North and lasted there for over 200 years.

This exchange is where the trust-building happened, the moment he saw that I believed him, that I could believe that a white southerner abhorred racism and that racism was not a southern phenomenon, it was an American phenomenon.

The purpose of establishing rapport between researcher and participant is to both generate rich data while at the same time ensuring respect is maintained between researcher and participant. In other words, rapport is necessary for methodological rigour, but in addition to this, rapport is a necessary facet of ethical rigor (Guillemin and Heggen, 2008, p. 292).

He says, “be sure to remind them...” signifying a trust between us that we share a knowledge about the other – a white northern other who believes that racism is only a southern problem.

I certainly used my geographic connections to Louisville and my easily recovered southern accent to build rapport and trust with participants. I heard my participants talk against the myths of southern exceptionalism AND northern enlightenment.

But what is difficult about this place where I have ended up is that my dissertation is not in fact a story of egalitarian ideals and making it to the mountaintop. Rather, it is a look at the messy details of the lives of parents and children and the way in which they recreate their class and racial privilege in their school choices. This piece then does not,
as perhaps I hoped it would, challenge the narrative of the southern racist and uncover the myth of northern enlightenment. Because I am doing a case study of Louisville, I have heard testimony of racism and listened to coded racialized talk. And although I know that this racism exists in the north, my project can do little to illuminate that reality because of the narrow focus of my study. Doing a comparative study with interviews of white northern suburbanites would undoubtedly reveal the same racially coded language that I have witnessed in my past twenty years living in the north. Yet that is not the demographic of my study. So I struggle with this problem – that my study will once again be a testament to the southern racist, one that maintains the location of racism in the southern United States and does little to disrupt the myth of northern enlightenment. My white participants know that Northerners view Southerners as racist; they resisted that label in talking to me and they made an effort to define themselves as anti-racist and to distance themselves from racism.

**Collecting Data**

The data for this dissertation came from in-depth interviews, observations at school open houses and the Showcase of Schools, and through analysis of newspaper articles, school publications and marketing materials. Background interviews were also conducted to gather information on the school district and the context of the study. The data analysis portion of the study worked with the testimony of 23 parents who had children between the ages of four and eleven and lived in the Louisville Metropolitan area.
I conducted background interviews with a wide variety of informants prior to starting and during my interviews with parents. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of the context and history of busing and school desegregation in Louisville. These interviews commenced in the Fall of 2009 as part of the Qualitative Research course and continued through January of 2012. The first interviews I conducted were with two newspaper editors who were active reporters during the original desegregation case in 1975. These participants were able to illuminate the political landscape related to school desegregation in Louisville, and were able to appropriately stress the sensitive nature of the topic as well as the possible implications of returning to segregated communities. Additional interviews with a former state legislator who was threatened for his support of busing in the 1970’s and an African American State legislator who had attended segregated schools in Jefferson County further developed my understanding of the volatile nature of the subject. Three attorneys who were actively involved in the original desegregation cases or the suits brought against the police in breaking up riots in the 1970’s allowed me to gain access to much of the history of desegregation in Louisville that is not readily available in published texts. An in-depth interview with a housing official with over 30 years of service in Louisville helped me to understand possible housing solutions to segregation and the current climate for providing integrated housing solutions.

I was also able to do informal interviews with three principals and two long term teachers who met with me to discuss their own experiences with busing in the original desegregation case and with the current assignment plan. The two teachers in
particular had worked for JCPS for over 30 years and had personal experience with JCPS pre-busing and post-busing in 1975. Because both participants still teach currently, I was able to have conversations with them about how desegregation plans in Louisville have changed over the years. The three principals, interviewed off-record were important for understanding the difference between what the assignment plan aims to do and what actually happens in their schools. It was because of these interviews that I was motivated to start investigating the data about who is actually attending schools and how the attendance by demographics differs from the stated demographic goals. I also conducted an interview with a parent whose child did not fit the demographics of the study. As a resident of Anchorage, and part of the first group of white students bused to Central High School, the African American High School of Louisville in 1975, she had an interesting story to tell and was eager to talk about her experience. She had vivid memories of watching the news with her neighbors, waiting to see the results of the first court case to mandate busing in Louisville. She was in middle school at Anchorage School, which only went through 9th grade at the time, and was waiting to see where she would go to high school as a result of the plan. I first became aware of the racial tracking that existed in the first assignment plan through this interview as she relayed her experience attending Central High School. Her testimony about being in all white classes at Central forced me to think about integration within the school building and pushed me to ask subsequent parents about internal segregation in school buildings. In order to understand the data produced by the school district I also
conducted interviews with two administrators in the Accountability, Research and Planning department of JCPS.

Beyond the informal conversations and observations that occurred during my multiple trips to Louisville, I conducted five focused participant observations and wrote detailed field notes of these events. I attended the 2010 Showcase of Schools in Louisville as well as Open House/Tours at Brandeis MST Magnet School, Roosevelt Perry School, and Coleridge Taylor Elementary School. I also attended the January 2012 school board meeting where the school board voted on adjustments to the school assignment plan. I began gathering newspaper articles on JCPS and schooling in Louisville in the summer of 2009. My father, who was bedridden with cancer, was my faithful research assistant, and he religiously clipped articles and sent them to me until his death in September of 2011. After his death, a childhood friend of his heard that my father had been doing this and he continued sending me articles throughout the fall of 2011. The assistance from both my father and his friend were important in collecting a robust sample of articles about the assignment plan. I also collected flyers, newsletters, and marketing materials from the Showcase of Schools, from tours of the schools and from the district offices of JCPS. I downloaded the Elementary Data Book and other materials from the JCPS website. I also took photos of the booths at the Showcase of Schools to document the marketing of schools to parents. In June of 2012, I toured the neighborhoods of Louisville and took photos of schools and neighborhoods that were mentioned in my interview data.
Neighborhoods

The distinct neighborhoods of Louisville are mentioned by many of the participants and are a key to understanding the racialized geography of Louisville. The neighborhoods are described in more detail in Chapter Five, but I include a map and short descriptions here to introduce the geography of the metropolitan area.

1. Downtown (green circle) - The area from the river east to Bardstown Road and west to Roy Wilkins Boulevard. The area consists mainly of businesses but also includes old shotgun houses in "Smoketown," which are owned or rented by mainly African American families; as well as some high rise apartments and other mixed housing developments near the hospital medical complex.

2. The West End (blue circle) - The area west of downtown from the river, south to Shively. The area is largely African-American and has economic diversity with substantial owner-occupied middle income housing as well as subsidized housing.

3. The South End (yellow circle) begins in Shively and stretches south out Dixie Highway to the border of Bullitt county. This area is mainly white and working class, although many new immigrant groups have moved into the northern portion in recent years. The South End is where the majority of protests against the original busing plan in the 1970's occurred.
Map 3.1 Louisville Neighborhoods

4. The Highlands (purple circle) begins east of Broadway and extends out Bardstown Road, including all of the area around Cherokee park. The area is somewhat racially diverse, but the majority of the residents are white. It has mixed income housing and is
known as the area of town for artists, academics and musicians. The homes around the park are very high income.

5. The East End (dark pink circle) begins east of the Highlands and stretches out Shelbyville Road to the Oldham County Border. It is mainly white and upper middle class.

6. Anchorage (light pink circle) is an independent public school district inside the east end. It was not included in the merger between the Jefferson County School District and the Louisville City School District in 1970 and has operated its own public school for 100 years. The residents of Anchorage are almost entirely white and upper middle class.

7. Oldham County (dark orange square) is north east of Louisville and Jefferson County and maintains its own public school district, which uses residential address for school assignment. Oldham County is predominately white and mainly middle class with some rural poverty in areas.

**Types of Schools**

In the course of gathering interview participants I focused my outreach to different areas of the county with the aim of recruiting from as many different schools and neighborhoods as possible. The schools that parents in the study researched can be categorized into eight main types, described below with the schools that participants researched listed with each type. Following the description of types of schools is a table
of the schools with demographic information, including student body composition and achievement.

1. JCPS Resides Schools are the schools that do not have a special focus or application process. They are traditionally located within a neighborhood and the students who attend the school are largely from the surrounding area. However, a reside school is not a neighborhood school, because you are not guaranteed admission to the school just because you live in the neighborhood. Parents must apply and there does seem to be some preference for neighborhood parents if the school is listed as the first choice. JCPS resides schools are very diverse in terms of population and school performance depending on the population of students served. Some of these JCPS resides have been recently converted to new magnets, although they do not have the popularity or name recognition of the established magnets and therefore do not receive the same high number of applicants.

2. JCPS Math Science Technology Magnets are schools that focus on STEM fields. The one elementary school in this category is Brandeis, which requires an application from all applicants. Brandeis is a highly sought after magnet in the West End of Louisville because attending it virtually guarantees the student admission to the MST magnet middle schools, which feed into DuPont Manuel High School, one of the best high schools in the state.

3. Traditional Magnets are schools that have a strict discipline code, uniforms and high academic expectations. The traditional elementary schools feed into traditional
middle and high schools. Male, the traditional high school, is also one of the best high schools in the state, and parents often place their children in the traditional elementary school, as a method to ensure admission to Male. Participants in the study looked at Greathouse Shyrock, Audubon and Carter Traditional Elementary Schools.

4. Montessori Magnets are elementary schools that use the Montessori philosophy of teaching. The schools have multi-age classrooms and all of the teachers have been trained in the Montessori method. Students have an individualized work plan that they follow, so every student learns at his/her own pace. There are two Montessori Magnet Schools in Louisville, Coleridge Taylor and Kennedy Montessori. Coleridge Taylor has become popular with white middle class parents in the Highlands and East End. It enrolls about half of its students from its downtown neighborhood, which is predominately African American and poor and the other half from families outside the neighborhood.

5. The Brown School is a progressive magnet school located downtown, and bears the name of local entrepreneur James Graham Brown. The school was originally located in the old Brown Hotel and is now located on first street downtown. The Brown School promotes itself as a small school which offers a liberal arts education in a nurturing environment. Students receive Suzuki music instruction along with academic subjects. In order for their children to attend the Brown School parents must attend the Open House in November the year before their child enrolls in kindergarten. Parents then must fill out an application and get a recommendation from their child's pre-school
teacher. Admission to the school is highly competitive. The Brown School also has a middle school and high school. Many participants in the study looked at the Brown School, but most decided not to apply.

6. Catholic Schools are located throughout Louisville and can be attended by Catholics and non-Catholics. Most of the Catholic schools in Louisville are part of a parish and families attending church in that parish have lowered tuition at the school. Parents tithe at the local church, which makes up the difference in tuition. St. Margaret Mary is a Catholic, non-parish school. It is more expensive and more competitive than the parish Catholic Schools. There is wide variety in the Catholic School offerings in terms of competitiveness and facilities.

7. Protestant Private Schools are not as common as Catholic Schools. The Latin School of Louisville with a Highlands and East end campus, was one of the private protestant schools investigated by many parents. It offers a classical education, teaching both Latin and Greek, with traditional recitation and rote exercises. It has school only four days per week for elementary students. It also has a middle school and high school.

7. Secular Private Schools include Collegiate, Kentucky Country Day and St. Francis in Goshen. These schools are some of the most expensive in Louisville. Collegiate is located in the Highlands and is known to be more religiously and ethnically diverse than other private schools in Louisville, although the private schools in Louisville do not publish demographic information.
7. Specialty Private Schools include two schools that specialize in learning disabilities. DePaul focuses on students with reading disabilities. Meredith Dunn serves students with a wide variety of learning disabilities.

8. Anchorage School and Oldham County School are described in the neighborhood section above. These schools are public but not part of the JCPS system, and students are guaranteed a school placement based upon residential address.

I used the data sources that my participants used and supplemented those with other online resources to find demographic information about the schools. I visited the websites of the schools, read the school report cards on the Kentucky State Department of Education website, and analyzed the data in the Elementary School Data book (2012) published by JCPS. There are 98 elementary schools in the Jefferson County School District and additional private schools and other public elementary schools in outlying counties. I purposefully looked for participants who attended schools or lived in each of the demographic areas of Louisville: Highlands, East End, South End, Anchorage, West End, Oldham County and the West End/Downtown. In order to understand the demographics of the schools parents were researching, I used the demographic information about these schools to help me understand the racial and class student body composition observed by parents on their visits. Although I analyzed the data from all of the elementary schools in the JCPS site, I have included a table below of the schools most commonly researched or attended by the participants in the study. I believe understanding the actual demographics of a school is important in
understanding the issues that parents are both mentioning and not mentioning in their interviews. In the table, I have included: the percentage of white students to represent the racial composition of the schools, the % of free and reduced lunch to demonstrate the prevalence of low income students in a school, the type of school (secular private, JCPS reside, Math Science Technology (MST) magnet, JCPS/new magnet, JCPS Traditional magnet, Catholic and Oldham County); Title I status (a Title One School has a poverty rate about 40%), Adequate Yearly Progress Met (this serves as a proxy for multiple test scores, and a "yes" indicates that the percentage of proficient students is acceptable according to the stipulations of No Child Left Behind), and finally the annual tuition for the private schools. For Catholic Schools, the first tuition listed is for Catholic parishioners and the second higher rate is for non-Catholics. The actual tuition rates are important to consider when looking at non-Catholic parents who decided to enroll in Catholic school rather than secular private schools, as the Catholic schools have much lower tuition rates. The neighborhoods for the schools are described in more detail in Chapter Five of the text.
<table>
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<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>% White Students</th>
<th>% Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Title I School</th>
<th>Adequate Yearly Progress</th>
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Participants

I connected with the 23 parents interviewed for the study through multiple means. I posted my information on internet blogs where moms were talking about the assignment plan and schooling in Louisville. One such blog, Moms Like Me, sponsored by the Courier Journal, brought me a number of participants. I also posted signs in coffee-houses, at parks and in grocery stores. When I attended the Showcase of Schools or Open Houses at the schools, I introduced myself to parents and asked if they were interested in being interviewed. I also established a Facebook page with my contact information and background about the study. I used this to connect with participants and to join groups whose membership reflected a group I needed for the study, including groups like “LGBT Parent Support” group and “I grew up in the West End of Louisville in the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s.” In addition to using advertising and introducing myself to strangers, I used connections in Louisville to connect to parents who fit my demographic group. Through purposeful sampling, I aimed to represent the different geographic regions and identity groups in terms of race and class in Louisville. All friends and family in Louisville were notified that I was looking for participants, and people I knew posted information of their Facebook pages and sent mass emails to friends. I used a personal connection to the Urban League to send out a mass email to African American parents to inform them of the study. At least half a dozen friends and family members sent out mass emails to contacts to advertise the study. In addition, participants I interviewed connected me with other parents in their schools or workplaces who had a different story to tell about their school choice experience. I did
not intend to interview only mothers in my study, but the only people who responded to my inquiries were women. I did have several fathers add their comments while I was interviewing their wives but no fathers asked to participate. Almost all of the married participants indicated that the school search process was their responsibility and that their husbands were involved in the overall parameters for the search and/or brought in for the final decision between one or two schools. The leg work of the school search process was thus a gendered task, but husbands and fathers did give important and determining statements about school choices. Divorced or single moms indicated that the school choice process was theirs alone. I choose to maintain that this is a study of parents choosing schools, rather than mothers choosing schools, because the school choice process did involve both mothers and fathers.

Participants were chosen purposely to gain a diverse set of experiences with the school system. In the end, my participants came from or moved to six areas of town: South End, West End, East End, Highlands, Anchorage and Oldham County. These participants focused their research on thirty different schools and their children attended twenty different schools. By the time my research was finished, participants had enrolled their children in every type of school, with the exception of the Brown School.

1. Winona is originally from South Carolina, and her husband, a Louisville native attended DuPont Manuel. Winona is a graduate student and her husband, a college graduate, runs his own business. Winona bought a house in Germantown, west of the Highlands in a gentrifying neighborhood that is
classified as an Area A. Her only daughter was first assigned to Hawthorne Elementary School, but she switched her school in the middle of the year to Coleridge Taylor so that she could take advantage of a spot that opened up prior to the application period for new students. She chose Coleridge Taylor primarily for the Montessori curriculum. Winona is white and was raised in a middle class family. She wanted her daughter to have an experience in a diverse school and says she has a wide idea of diversity that includes more than just race.

2. Barbara is white professional with a college degree. She and her husband bought a house in the South End, a mainly working class part of town, to be near her husband’s job. Both Barbara and her husband are transplants to Louisville. Barbara was very focused on the assignment plan and where her son would attend school and did extensive research on the schools in their cluster to help her with her decision and strategy for the application. Barbara has three sons, and her interviews consisted of discussions about her eldest son, who enrolled in Kindergarten at Medora Elementary during the study.

3. Kagan, a white professional, is a transplant to Louisville, and her husband is a native Louisvillian. She originally purchased a home in the South End but then relocated to the East End. She is a white professional with an advanced degree, and her husband is a bus driver. After examining her many options and applying to schools, she ended up enrolling her twin sons in Audubon Traditional School.

4. Martha, a white physician and mother of one son, relocated to Louisville to find better academic services for her son, who was diagnosed with a reading
disability. She grew up in rural Kentucky and her husband was raised in Louisville. She was raised in a middle class family, as was her husband. She decided to buy a home in Anchorage after getting her only son on grade level in math through extensive tutoring programs.

5. Susan, a white professional from out of state, originally lived in Jefferson County and was hoping to send her two daughters to public school in the JCPS system. She went through the application process for the JCPS schools but was disturbed by the chaos and cold reception of JCPS employees. In her follow-up interview she discussed her family’s recent decision to build a house in Oldham County in order to avoid the JCPS schools.

6. Sage, a white Jewish mother of two, was raised in Louisville and attended both private and public schools. Sage has a professional career. Her white Presbyterian husband was also raised in Louisville. Despite their religious backgrounds, Sage and her husband decided to enroll their daughter and eventually their younger son in St. Agnes, the Catholic school in the Highlands, where they live.

7. Ellen is a white professional and mother of two. She works in downtown Louisville and sends both of her children, a girl and a boy to the magnet Brandeis Elementary, which is located west of downtown in the West End.

8. Victoria is a white stay-at-home mom of twin daughters. She started her children in public school and then moved them to Catholic School and then to Meredith Dunn in order to get them appropriate services for their learning
disabilities. Her husband has a professional job, and they live in a middle class neighborhood in the east end of Louisville.

9. Ella is an African-American grandmother who is has sole custody of three of her grandchildren. Ella has lived in Louisville all of her life and attended JCPS schools as did her children. The mother and father of her grandchildren were murdered. Ella has stable employment in a working class job. Her youngest grandchild is enrolled in Jeffersontown Elementary School because this is the school where she was placed by the school district.

10. Jane, a white woman who lives in the Highlands, works part-time in a research position to give her the flexibility to be with her children. Her husband is a doctor. Although the family moved to the Highlands in part to attend Bloom Elementary, Jane’s son is enrolled at The Latin School. Her son was not assigned to Bloom - his reside school – despite his having put it in first place. She also has two younger children.

11. Marcy moved to Louisville with her husband, a native of Louisville, and her three children from the West Coast. She and her husband are both professionals. Marcy is white and Catholic and was originally interested in enrolling her children in public school and to that end bought a home in the east end. After her son was assigned to Wheatley, a low-performing school downtown, she enrolled him in St. Albert’s Catholic School. Her son has sensory and behavioral disabilities, and Marcy is worried that the Catholic School will expel him because of his behavior or, at the very least, be unable to meet his needs.
12. Maya is an African American, native of Louisville and a professional educator. She lives in the West End of Louisville with her husband, who is also an educator. Her husband has twins who are in high school. Maya and her husband also have a daughter who enrolled in kindergarten during the study at the magnet Brandeis Elementary.

13. Darla, a white mother of two, is a professional with a master’s degree. She grew up in the Louisville Metropolitan area and attended public school in Indiana and private high school in Louisville. She and her husband got a divorce shortly before the study began. She enrolled her son in the magnet Montessori School, Coleridge Taylor, and plans to enroll her younger daughter there as well.

14. Christie is a Louisville native who lives in the South End with her husband, who is also a native of Louisville. They have two daughters, one in elementary school and one in middle school. She works part-time as an administrative assistant, and is a college graduate. She stayed home with her daughters until the youngest started kindergarten at Smyrna Elementary.

15. Laurel, a white professional who relocated to the east end of Louisville from the western United States, is originally from the Midwest. She moved to Louisville because of her husband’s job and was previously employed in her profession. Her work opportunities in Louisville have been sporadic, and at times she has worked full-time and at others she has been at home. She has one daughter enrolled at Coleridge Taylor, which was her third choice school.
16. Mary is a native of Louisville and is currently working in a secretarial position. She is white and Catholic and had her elder daughter enrolled in public school. Her dissatisfaction with this daughter’s experience led her to investigate Catholic Schools for her younger daughter, although she did apply to JCPS under the school assignment plan. Her husband is a native of Louisville as well.

17. Rosie is a white mother of two daughters. She was raised in the South End but moved to the East End with her husband to get access to the east end schools for one daughter, whom she kept in kindergarten an extra year to avoid busing her downtown.

18. Creighton is a white mother of two daughters. She owns a business with her husband and is committed to her Highlands neighborhood. She enrolled her daughter in Hawthorne Elementary after thorough investigation into all of her school options.


20. Angie is a white professional who currently has her two children enrolled in a Jewish pre-school program. She was educated in the JCPS system and skeptical about the outcomes for all students, and worried about the opportunities for her daughter, who is an early-reader. Her husband is not from Louisville and doubtful of the assignment plan.
21. Felicia is an African American professional and native of Louisville. She attended Male High School, as did her husband, who is also a professional. She and her husband were hoping to enroll their only daughter at Greathouse Shyrock Traditional School, but they are not in its catchment zone and did not receive the hardship transfer they requested. They enrolled their daughter in Catholic School.

22. Michelle is an African American professional and the mother of two. She is a native of Louisville and returned with her transplant husband after spending over twenty years in the northeast. She originally enrolled her son in Norton Elementary for kindergarten and then switched him to the math and science magnet, Brandeis.

23. Audre is a white professional and the mother of an adopted daughter. Audre is a lesbian. She recently separated from her partner and is now raising her daughter alone. She is focusing her education search on schools that can positively respond to the needs of her daughter, who has emotional and behavioral disabilities.
Parent Interviews

I began conducting the parental interviews in December of 2010 and continued until June of 2012. I traveled to Louisville five times to interview parents: December 2010, February 2011, June 2011, January 2012, and June 2012 and stayed a week to ten days each trip. I conducted interviews at the public library, at Heine Bros. Coffee house (multiple locations), Starbucks (multiple locations), Chili’s Restaurant, offices of parents, and the homes of parents. I let the participants choose the location of the interviews – whatever was the most convenient and comfortable for them. Interviewing parents in their homes was the most successful in terms of getting longer interviews with more revealing information. When these interviews were arranged through a mutual friend...

<table>
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<th>Demo.</th>
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<th>Neighborhood</th>
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Table 3.2 Interview Participants
or another participant they were also comfortable for me. However, a number of parent interviews were done with participants who learned about my study from a flier or an internet posting. These participants were known to me only because they answered an ad that I had posted, so when going to their home I had no outside confirmation that they were who they represented themselves to be. As a female researcher, I felt vulnerable at times showing up at a participant’s home – especially in neighborhoods that were new to me. However, I never ran into trouble in any of these interviews and ended up feeling silly for worrying. I feel great appreciation to the parents in the study who were open to inviting a strange researcher into their home. I am forever thankful for the generosity of the people of Louisville for opening their homes and businesses to my study.

I did not offer pay or any other remuneration to participants in the study. All of them expressed their hope to be able to improve schooling in Louisville at some point as motivation for participating. Many of the participants have asked to read the final product and have been interested in the conclusions I have drawn from the study. Throughout the interviews I was awed by the concern with which all of the participants had for the education of their children. Although the participants often defined a good education and the needs of their family and child in different ways, all participants showed great devotion and concern for their children.
The Grand Tour Question

My first interview protocol contained ten questions; however, after the first few interviews, I did not refer to it until the end of the interview. After meeting with the first participants, I realized that the interview protocol was getting in the way of listening to the stories of my participants. I decided to replace the formal ten questions with a grand tour question and then follow the participants to wherever they went in the interview, mindful of the issues that I wanted to cover at some point. For all parent participants, I started out with, “Tell me a little bit about your own history with schooling where you grew up.” When it seemed that the participant had talked for as long as they could, and I had probed for as long as possible, I went back to the protocol to check and see if all of the questions had been answered. One of the reasons I believe that this worked particularly well was that I was not jumping to the next question or constantly looking at my questions. I was not focused on my interview protocol—I was focused on their answers to my questions. This worked particularly well with my participants because they were very eager to talk about their experiences, and many had stories to tell. For almost all of the participants, all ten questions were answered by following the arc of their stories from their initial answer to the grand tour question and the subsequent probes about what they were telling me. At the end I would check the following list to ensure that all ten areas had been covered: 1) When did you start thinking about schooling for your child? 2) What kinds of considerations have you made in choosing a school for your child? 3) Where do you live currently, and what factors led to your choosing that particular location? 4) Have you considered, or are you planning
on, moving? If so, why? 5) Tell me about the process of applying for schools? 6) How did you gather information about the schools? Where or from whom did you get information? 7) How has the school helped or hindered your ability to get information? 8) Tell me about your experiences visiting schools in the area. 9) What are you looking for when you are looking at a school? How do you know you have found it? 10) Tell me about your child/ren and how they have responded to their schooling environments.

At the end of the interview, I always asked parents if they had anything that they wanted to add. Many times they said no at first, and then when I turned off the recorder and started to leave, they would launch into a story that was crucial to the research and even more insightful to the school selection process. I recorded as much as I could remember from these speeches when I returned to my car.

Data Analysis

All of the parent interviews used in the analysis were recorded using a digital recorder. Participants were informed of the recorder use and signed a consent to interview and record the interview. I transcribed all 23 original interviews and the eight follow-up interviews in Microsoft Word, using notes I took during the interview to add observer comments about the setting of the interview and any information that could be seen but not heard. If comments were made or things happened after the interview was complete, then I made a new digital file in which I spoke about the events that had happened after I turned off the recorder. These recorded thoughts were transcribed at the end of the transcription file. All of the transcriptions were imported into NVIVO, a
qualitative analysis software program. Other marketing materials and documents from the school district were also imported into NVivo in pdf and Word files.

I used emergent coding to analyze the data into themes—called Nodes in NVivo. These codes were defined as I read and reread each transcript. A codebook of node titles and descriptions were created in NVivo. Some sections of data were coded in multiple nodes. As new codes emerged from later data sets, I went back to the first data sets and reread them for that particular node. Eventually, I settled on 33 nodes, which included such things as Not Welcome Here, Confusing Process and Buying Houses for Schools. NVivo allows the researcher to look through the transcript and see color-coded tags on the coded sections of data. Additionally, a researcher can pull up all of the quotes from all data sets in a particular node. The coded transcripts as well as the summary of each node were printed and added to a binder of data.

Publications in digital format were also coded under the same themes as the interviews and added to the nodes established from the interviews. Print materials not available digitally were coded by hand and the quotes from the data that were coded were put into a Microsoft Word document, imported into NVivo, and then coded electronically, so that all coded material was located in the summaries of each Node in NVivo. Background interviews were not coded in NVivo, as these interviews were used largely as a means to learn about what questions to ask and what to look for in the research. Quotes from some of these participants are included in parts of the
dissertation when they are helpful in providing context to the discussion or evidence for a position.

**Limitations of the Study**

This dissertation is limited in that it addresses the experiences of only 23 parents of children in Louisville. Although the sample purposed to include a wide variety of voices from Louisville, it is largely white; five out of the 23 participants are African-American, which is 21% of the total. Although this percentage is greater than the proportion of African-Americans in the population of Louisville, it is still a limitation. Future studies may be conducted to include a more randomized sample of participants; I feel, however, that the interviews of the parents in the study demonstrate the complexities of developing an assignment plan that involves busing, magnet schools and a modified choice plan. An additional limitation is the inability to include observations of the school assignment process at the district level or within meetings of principals and school officials. Because this study was done outside the purview of the school district, and because of the vast number of legal cases filed against JCPS, it was impossible for me to gain access or information about the actual selection process for magnet schools and resides schools from the people who do the assigning. My participants voiced many theories about how students were assigned to schools, and many spoke about this process not being random. They used as evidence the words of school principals and teachers, who assured them that the “principal knowing them” would make all the difference in getting accepted. This part of the process, how the assignment is done,
was not something I could observe. Even if I had access to interviews with principals or teachers on this subject on the record, I doubt that I would get an accurate picture of how assignment happens. Although I did not gain institutional knowledge about this part of the process, my participants had strong feelings about how it happened, and this conviction impacted their actions and their choices.
Chapter Four: FAMILY

“It just doesn’t fit with the pattern of my life”

The field of the family, the primary *habitus*, was the place where the majority of parents began their explanation of who they were and how they made choices. They defined themselves through their family and the choices the family had already made prior to coming to decisions related to schooling. When families spoke about the school choosing process, they emphasized negotiating the demands of running a household or the logistics of their family lives. Most families considered their lives already structured around work and location. Parents viewed their day-to-day considerations as inevitable responsibilities, things that they chose out of natural circumstances and aspects of their lives that they took as a given, not to be changed. It was the pattern of their life and it could not be altered. The logistics of life that they most consistently mentioned were the location of their work in relation to schools and the reality of transportation between school and work and work and home. Parents emphasized the need to get to their children quickly in an emergency during the day, and they discussed commuting times for their children and themselves. Parents consistently held on to a firm belief in the cohesiveness of their family, and for the parents in the study, this meant placing an emphasis on keeping all of their children in the same school. They articulated this as an issue of fairness among siblings and the unity of the family.

Although some parents prioritized the selection of a particular magnet school, it was always framed as a choice they made because it fit into the logistics of their lives, a
set of geographic and work choices that were made prior to the school choice decision. Parents did not, in their testimony to the researcher, connect these logistical choices to a geography of race or class, and did not actively consider spaces as raced or classed. They described these decisions as natural outgrowths of their preferences, tastes or just “what you do next,” framing these logistical choices as "color-blind" they did not actively recognize their choices as racialized or classed.

In this manner, parents “actively produce (d) social reality through their mundane activities of sense-making” (Wacquant, 2007, p. 3). In other words the social worlds of class and race were constructed and reinforced by the altogether real necessities of daily life, and, in turn these daily life necessities and choices reinforced a social hierarchy that already existed. Parents had already chosen to purchase homes or rent apartments in areas where the majority of people were of the same race and/or class. Parents did not articulate that they chose a particular location because of the race or the class of the people in that area, and when pushed were reticent to talk about race at all. The first thirty minutes of most interviews focused on these logistical issues, and efforts to steer the conversation toward seeing race or class did not come until later, when schools were discussed. When talking about choosing housing, parents reflected on that decision as one of tastes and preferences about homes, neighborhood amenities, distance from work or grandparents, or their history with Louisville. Parents by and large saw these choices as neutral in the sense that they were not consciously motivated by trying to reproduce their class/racial identity. They connected these decisions to the mundane schedule of managing a household; they did not actively
connect how their decision-making was connected to a broader hierarchy of race and class. Most parents operated from a place of fixed options about transportation and work responsibilities and decided what was possible and impossible based upon these responsibilities.

As parents considered schools, they thought about the needs of their family: (1) what was logistically feasible for them given their work and other responsibilities; (2) how they wanted their family to operate as a unit; (3) how extended family could be used to help. When considering school choices that were outside of the neighborhood or "chosen" community, parents focused their discussions on issues of age-appropriate activities for elementary school children. It was only when this cognitive dissonance occurred, when their school assignment did not fit with their assumptions about the type of school their children would attend, did parents begin to talk actively about race or class, and usually only when probed specifically about these issues. Parents described in detail the logistical requirements of work and school that reinforced and supported their decision to send their child to a school that reflected their own race and/or class, using language about the logistics of life to explain the decisions they made. Throughout the interviews, I was cognizant of the fact that parents were not talking about race, or mentioning race; for the majority of participants, I had to introduce questions about race or class in order for them to discuss these issues, and even then parents would avoid the subject or claim that they did not notice race or class. Furthermore, families seemed to view the way their family did things as the
"natural" way of life. They did not examine their place or role in the social order, but raised their child in the way that "made sense" to them.

Just as Bourdieu saw the family as the primary habitus, the place where the natural arbitrariness of the social order is introduced and inculcated into the child, I began my exploration of the testimony of the participants here, in the life of the family. Through their testimony, I uncovered the rhythm of their lives, which they see as static, unchangeable. The logistics of transportation, the desire to keep siblings together, and the support of extended family all became important components of how parents made schooling work with their lives and how they justified their school choices.

**Working families and the logistics of transportation**

For the parents in the study, the logistics of life were centered around work and transportation to work and school. The vast majority of the participants in the study were mothers who worked outside the home. These mothers talked at great length about their need to provide transportation to their children and how this interacted with their work responsibilities. Most of these working moms worked full-time and needed before and after school care for their children: therefore, their decision-making was complicated by secondary care.

Free transportation is provided at the start of the school day and at the end, but is not provided for parents needing transportation to a before-school site and from an after-school site. Additionally, transportation from before-school and to after-school is
provided only when the supplementary care is located in the same cluster as the school
the child attends. In the state of Kentucky, bus transportation is not provided to private
schools by the public system; however, some private schools in Louisville have private
transportation for their students. Many parents were interested in on-site care for
their child to reduce the number of transitions during the day. The YMCA provides
before and after-school care (called CEP) on site at 56 out of the 92 JCPS elementary
schools. In addition, JCPS will provide transportation to CEP at another JCPS elementary
school if the school does not have one, or to a private after-school program if that
program is in the same cluster as the school the child attends. Because JCPS does not
provide transportation home at six PM for students staying in the after-school
programs, parents are responsible for picking children up in the evening from after-care.
The same applies for parents needing before-school care. Parents using before or after-
school care need to transport their children; therefore, the location of the after-school
program and the elementary school (if that is where the child is going after-school)
becomes very important. Parents can drop children off at 7:00 AM and must pick them
up by 6 PM from the YMCA program (CEP Brochure, 2011). Before-school and after-
school care for the full five days costs $74 per week.¹⁴ For most working moms in the
study, on-site before and after-school care were imperative to their ability to maintain
their work responsibilities, and the logistics of transportation to this care made up a
large part of the interview sessions. For the majority of the participants, the
responsibilities of transportation and planning for transportation rested with the

mother. The gendered nature of transportation responsibilities of the mother was evident on examination of the data but was not fully probed in the interview sessions. There is, therefore, insufficient data to comment on how or why the responsibilities fell on the mother for these particular families.

Angie described supplementary care as the primary reason she began considering private school options. She was worried about the logistics of supplementary care and balancing work and family. The private school she discusses is one that is between her work downtown and her home in St. Matthews,

But the before and after school care stuff, I mean, we are a two-parent working family that works 40+ hours a week and so there are times when I'm a little bit nervous about how I'm going to get to her in time to pick her up if she doesn't go to Collegiate. The JCPS afterschool maybe doesn't last as long. I have got some questions about how long it lasts and if they have certain days off. All that kind of stuff stresses me out a little bit. (Interview, Angie)

Angie was worried about her school being in the opposite direction to her work and how that would fit into work responsibilities, commuting and traffic. If she chose the private school, Collegiate, then she was assured of a choice that would be in-between her work and her child’s school. Choosing Collegiate would eliminate the uncertainty of the assignment plan. Some public schools would have fit her criterion of being between work and home, but other public schools would not. Because she would not know the location of the school in JCPS to which she was accepted until late May – likely after
private schools were full - the certainty that Collegiate offered appeared to alleviate the stress of logistics for Angie. “What is likely becomes what we actively choose” (Maton, 2008, p. 58). Angie’s economic ability to consider private school determines which choice is more stressful, the financial burden of private school or the uncertainty of being assigned to a school difficult to attend because of work responsibilities.

Angie had not investigated other options for after school care and seemed overwhelmed by piecing together different before-school and after-school programs. When she talked about figuring this out, she threw her hands up in the air and sighed, showing her exasperation with the entire process. Although Angie was married, she did not talk about her husband as a possible source for transportation.

Choosing after-school at a JCPS school is not the only option for parents. They can opt to have their child transported to a private after-school program on the bus, if that after-school program is located in the student’s cluster. Barbara talks about her decision to send her eldest, a kindergartner, to the private after-school program located at her younger child’s day-care center.

I got to get this kid back and forth to school every day and both of us work full-time and I can’t count on either one of us to take them every day because he needs before school and after school care and at this point I'd like to keep them all together at the same place so we don't have this big involved shuffle everyday

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15 The cluster is pie-shaped portion of the city containing the 10-15 schools to which a child may be assigned. The geographic boundaries of the clusters are in the appendix. Private after-school sites within this geographic boundary are eligible to receive students transported on public school buses.
of drop this kid up here and this one over here then go get these kids. I need to keep things as simple as possible. –Barbara

Barbara goes on to explain that she was unsure if her child would be allowed to attend his day care center for after school because of the new assignment plan. Her first choice school was not currently sending a bus to her child care site, and the child care director told her that her chosen school would not send a bus there. JCPS reiterated to her, over and over again, that as long as a child care site was in the same cluster as the school the child attended, they would be given transportation. Barbara was then responsible for picking her son up after her private after-school program ended. Barbara was luckier than her friend that she discussed in our meeting. This friend found out on the first day of school that her child would no longer be transported to his after-school child care because it was outside of his cluster.

Barbara, who originally relocated to Louisville when her husband began studying at one of the seminaries, describes her situation in more detail,

I work full-time and I have two other kids. I have childcare issues not just for the six-year-old but also for the two younger kids as well. My husband works, as well, of course, so we have childcare issues. We are not from here. I can't call grandmother to come pick him up from school every day. We know our neighbors but they all work too. So, I can't say hey can my child come to your house every day for 45 min. after school and wait for me. You know, it is not like it was years ago. -Barbara
Because Barbara and her husband are transplants to Louisville, they do not have the extended family support of most of the local participants. The support that Barbara was lacking from extended family factored heavily in the decisions of many parents in choosing schools. Like Angie, Barbara carried the burden of transportation in her family, and therefore it was primarily her decision to choose a school that fit with her schedule and the schedule of the rest of the family.

Most of the participants in the study worked either full or part-time, so their schedules compromised their ability to make choices that involved greater commuting distances from either work or home. The decision involved considerations about transportation to and from school but also the ability to attend school events or volunteer in their child’s school. In the initial part of the study, I took time to interview informants who had been involved with the advent of busing in Louisville. Those who talked about the success of busing in the mid 1970’s and early 1980’s in Louisville talked about the availability of stay-at-home mothers to provide transportation to downtown schools or to volunteer in classrooms in magnet schools (Multiple Interviews with parents of students who participated in the 1970’s desegregation plan, July 2009, January 2012). Three informants in particular talked about the availability of their wives to work in their child’s school and to provide transportation for their child to a downtown or West End school. Participants who had children today talked about the change in the availability of women or neighbors to take on daily or emergency transportation. Most of the participants who did talk about their work life talked about it as a necessity. Surviving on one income was not a possibility, and even if it was possible, the insecurity of the job
market forced some parents to continue with two parents working. Marcy, in particular, described in detail the stress of job losses she and her husband had experienced. Even though her husband earned a good salary, their experience of almost ending up homeless the last time he lost his job meant that she could not give up the security of her income. The opportunities available a generation earlier to have one working parent and one stay-at-home parent did not seem realistic to the participants in the study. Both Susan and Sage talked about meeting with women who stayed home and indicated their disconnection from this lifestyle. They felt connected to their jobs as a place for both financial sustenance and personal satisfaction. Both had made sacrifices and worked hard to obtain advanced degrees and saw their occupations as part of their identities. Neither Susan nor Sage discussed staying at home as a way to simplify transportation or being involved in their child’s life. As with Barbara, having two working parents was a necessity of life, and school choice had to work around that reality.

The geography of school choice

The sheer geographic size of the Jefferson County School District, over 300 square miles, and the distribution of housing and workplaces over that area has changed dramatically. Historically industry, business, medicine and law were all centered downtown. Even the first Ford automobile plant, which began manufacturing Model T’s in Louisville in 1913, was located downtown on South Third Street. Historically, there were no huge

\[\text{http://www.louisvilleky.gov/economicdevelopment/News/2012/6-13-12+new+ford+escapes+unveiled.htm}\]
business parks, factories or medical complexes in the outlying suburbs. Workers, in general, commuted to the downtown from the inner ring suburbs and then later from outer ring suburbs. That reality still holds for many of the participants in the study; they live in inner ring or outer ring suburbs and travel to the downtown area for jobs in the many law offices, hospitals, or universities in the downtown and West End. For parents who commuted downtown, considering one of the magnet schools was a real possibility because of the proximity of these schools to the downtown business district. Many of the participants who chose magnets talked about the proximity of their workplace to the magnet schools as one of the benefits of magnets: parent and child commuting together. Magnets fit into the pattern of their lives. Darla, a white professional who enrolled her son in Coleridge Taylor, the Montessori magnet, said of her commute, "I was working at eighth and Main so for me to drive him was no problem, it was like three blocks away." Darla enrolled her son in before and after-school care, so he could have the same work hours as she had, and she did not have to worry about his taking the bus or having someone meet his bus after school. Because she had a home in the inner ring suburbs and a job in the central downtown, the location of the magnet schools worked for her. The location of Coleridge Taylor made it possible for her to visit school during a lunch break or bring something to her child during the day. Participants who worked at the University of Louisville, which borders the downtown district, also mentioned convenient transportation as a reason to consider magnet schools. Michelle, like Jane, worked at the University, but she saw the proximity of Brandeis differently. As a middle-class African-American woman who was raised in the east end in the 1970’s,
Michelle understood that the magnet schools were designed to attract middle-class whites to the downtown and west end areas, but she was annoyed that choosing to live in the east end, where she grew up, meant that she would have to transport her child a long distance to attend Brandeis, the math-science and technology magnet, which is over 50% students of color and less than 30% of students on free and reduced lunch. She was one of the few participants who actively talked about race; choosing a diverse-school environment that was academically rigorous was important to her, and she was willing to make sacrifices to do it, but that didn’t mean she liked it:

It was somewhat disillusioning to me that if I wanted a different experience for my son...that as a parent I wanted something special – it was negative to me that I had to send my kid across the city to do that, so that is again an hour to an hour and half and I understood historically why that is – why there are no magnet programs in the east end. If I was new to the school that would seem really strange to me but because I know the history I understood why that was but I didn’t like it. So then distance was still the main thing.  - Michelle

Ultimately, Michelle chose to enroll her son in Brandeis after he was accepted from the waitlist in the middle of the summer. Prior to that, he had attended Norton, a high-performing school in his neighborhood in the far east end for a year, but Michelle decided that she wanted the more diverse and specialized education that only Brandeis could offer.  Because Michelle’s work was not far from Brandeis, she could provide transportation at times or attend school events after work or get to her son quickly if
there were an emergency. However, on most days, Michelle did take advantage of the
bus transportation, which required her son to travel for an hour to and from school with
a change of buses at the compound. A friend from his neighborhood took the same pair
of buses and they traveled to and from school together. Although it was quite a
distance from her home, it was close to her workplace, so she was close to her child’s
school during the day, a point she emphasized in interviews as a reason she liked
Brandeis. It would be easy for her to take a break from work to attend a school event or
parent conference. Furthermore, Brandeis had many parents of color who were
professionals, and its demographics reflected Michelle’s identity more than any other
school she could have chosen.

Ellen, a white professional who worked downtown and lived in the East End, also
chose to enroll her children in Brandeis because of its academic reputation. Because
Ellen worked downtown and Brandeis is located two and a half miles from the
downtown business district, Ellen could easily get to her children during the day. In fact,
her children are geographically closer to her during the day at Brandeis than if they
attended their reside school in their east end neighborhood. Ellen, like other parents,
talked passionately about wanting to be close to her children during the day. If they got
sick or she needed to attend a school event, she would be able to fit it into her work
day. Because traffic in Louisville can significantly lengthen commute times, parents
were very focused on this idea of being close to their children. The magnet schools in
this case fit into the pattern of work and commute that were already part of Ellen’s life.
However, none of these parents considered one of the non-magnet low-performing schools in the downtown or West End and insisted that they would not send their child to one of these schools had they been assigned. Between Ellen’s work and Brandeis there are at least half a dozen elementary schools. None of these schools were on Ellen’s list of schools to consider although she talks about transportation as an important piece of her decision. Brandeis differs from these other schools not in the race of the students who attend, but in the class of the students who attend. Brandeis comprises primarily students of color but they are also primarily middle-class children, whereas the other schools in the downtown area have much larger populations of low-income students. Moreover, these other schools are known to have low test scores and are often on the Schools in Need of Improvement Lists, whereas Brandeis is a selective school, which takes students by application only. Ellen did not talk about the composition of the low-income schools as a reason not to choose one, but she did mention a list of occupations of Brandeis parents: doctors, lawyers, and professors.

For the participants who worked downtown, magnets became a logistical possibility, but not all of the participants worked downtown. The Louisville Metro area has changed dramatically in the past thirty years, and many professionals and others do not commute downtown to work. As the growth of the Louisville Metro area has brought the development of business parks and hospitals in the outlying parts of the county, fewer parents are now traveling into the downtown area for work. Where there were once fields and farms in the northeastern suburbs, there are now business parks and hospital complexes. Multiple government agencies and large national companies have
their workplaces in the suburban parts of the county. These new workplaces mean that many parents are commuting west to east instead of east to west as they move from one suburban area to outer suburban areas where these new business parks are located.

Marcy, a white professional, described how she thought about her assignment to Wheatley, a non-magnet school downtown that has been on the Schools in Need of Improvement list. Her husband had listed it as their fourth choice on the JCPS application because the secretary at their home school would not accept the application without four choices.

I looked at where I was in the city because I was concerned about how am I going to get there. My recent work is in the opposite direction. I can't physically get downtown...right now I work out on Lynn Station and it is the opposite direction from downtown so I was like my work is the opposite way and I've got to be at work. I don't know. I just can't do that. The idea of sending him to a faraway school potentially that would require me to put him on a bus because I could not get him down there and back. You know basically I freaked. –Marcy

Marcy was worried about multiple issues in this downtown assignment, but one of the main issues was that it was not geographically possible for her to fulfill her work responsibilities in the east end when her home was also in the east end and her son’s school assignment was in the west end of downtown. Because she would need to provide transportation to before school and after school programs, it was logistically
impossible for her son to attend Wheatley. Instead she chose to hold her son in his pre-
kindergarten program an extra year and enroll him in Catholic school the next year.
Although Marcy describes her decision to avoid Wheatley as about transportation, the
histrionic language surrounding this choice, “I freaked,” speaks to greater issues beyond
the logistics of transportation. Although, Marcy was careful to talk about her anti-racist
sentiments, her language suggests that there are larger issues at work than just
transportation. However, Marcy was not willing to concede that her decision was
racially motivated. She took great pains to describe her anti-racist sentiments and her
identity as a “west-coast” hippie – distancing herself from the southern racist narrative.
She even described how she had switched all of her charitable donations to Wheatley –
She said that when she shopped at Target, her purchases would raise money for
Wheatley. Although she said the decision was about logistics, she expressed sincere
guilt for abandoning Wheatley – her assignment to this school caused her to reexamine
her commitment to her politics, her self-ascribed identity as a liberal hippie type clashed
with her reaction to her child being sent to a predominantly African-American school in
a predominantly African-American neighborhood. Her only explanation to me and to
herself was that the logistics of transportation would not work for Wheatley for her
child.

Rosie, whose child was also assigned to a school downtown, had a similar
reaction. Rosie, a white professional, is an educational trainer for businesses all over
the county. She prepares for her trainings and corresponds with clients from a home
office and commutes to the downtown office only once a month. She had, in fact,
sought this job and kept it because of its flexibility in allowing her to have access to her daughters during the day. Her part-time baby-sitter watches the girls while she works, so she has the flexibility to work in her home office or be elsewhere in the county doing trainings. She travels a great deal and can be in many different locations during one month. Rosie had relocated to the east end so that her daughters could take advantage of the high quality schools in the neighborhood where she lived and had imagined that her daughters would be close to her new home. Rosie decided not to apply to any of the downtown magnets because of the logistics of transportation.

When she was asked about why she did not consider one of the magnet schools she visited downtown, she replied,

    well, distance, I guess and the bus ride. I guess that is pretty much it. I mean it sounds like a pretty good school and it looks like it from what I have seen online on the Great Schools site and then from my boss, her granddaughter really likes it there and she is a former educator herself and she has been there and has lots of good things to say about it so I think that is probably a really good school but just location wise, you know it is probably a 35 minute drive from here to get there if we drove and then however much longer on the bus. – Rosie

Rosie could not imagine handling the logistics of transporting her daughter to a geographically distant school with a good reputation, so she was even less interested when she was assigned to a low-performing school equally far away in the downtown.
She enrolled her daughter in her private preschool for another year, hoping to get into her neighborhood school the next year.

Barbara, a white professional, works in the East End and her home is in the South End. Neither her home nor her work is located in the downtown or West End area, and her commute to work from school takes her in the opposite direction. Her son’s friends were applying to attend the traditional magnet school, Carter, in the West End but Barbara felt that the location of her work and home precluded her from making the same decision. Although she expressed regret that her son would lose contact with these friends, she felt that her transportation needs would not make a downtown magnet a possibility.

my goal is I don't want them on a bus going to a school that is 10 miles away from us in the opposite direction of our lives because that is the other thing with the way the cluster is structured...since I work out here in the East End you have your patterns of living, the boys daycare is up here, our house is here and I am coming from out in the East End all the time where my work is to pick them up..but it is just inconvenient with your time because maybe it is selfish but the reality is you have to put together your whole family’s life. -Barbara

Barbara goes on to explain how the amazing amount of traffic in Louisville on the interstate would make it very difficult for her to transport her child northwest of her house in the morning and then travel back past her house out to the East End only to return to the northwest and then her house in the afternoon. She described the
frequency of traffic jams and the resulting slim chance she would have to complete her work responsibilities and get to a school in the northwest in time for after-school pick-up.

Felicia, an African American professional who works in the East End also felt that her commute to the East End precluded enrolling her daughter at Brandeis, a high-performing magnet school in the downtown or West End. When asked why she did not consider the magnet schools she said,

Location. I mean yeah we would've looked at the magnet schools. They may have been great schools but it just would've been inconvenient for us as well. I mean, is it close to my work? Is it on the way to work? That is always in the back of our minds. – Felicia

Many participants described the logistics of getting their child to Brandeis as a reason not to apply to the highly sought-after magnet program. Jane says of her decision,

I was more interested at first but still not being knowledgeable about all of Louisville I was really surprised about how far away it was when I actually went there. So the logistics of getting there was one of the major drawbacks to me of considering Brandeis so when it came down to the registration I chose Bloom over ranking Brandeis because it was just the distance was really a drawback because I work at U of L and I thought it would be just a little bit further but I just kept driving and driving and I thought I surely should have passed it by now but it was really far away. - Jane
The downtown location of the magnet schools was a deterrent for parents like Jane, a white professional who lived east of the downtown. However, Jane did work at the University part-time and commuted there on a daily basis. Jane described Brandeis as being farther than she expected, while Michelle, who also works at the University and lives much farther to the east, described Brandeis as being close to her work. This difference in perception of distance coincides with the difference in racial identity of the two mothers. The white woman who does not match the identity of the school perceives it as impossibly far, and the African-American professional woman perceives it as close to her work but far from her home, a workable choice.

The changing patterns of commuting in Jefferson County impacted how magnet schools would work logistically for parents. Because many parents did not work near the downtown area, the magnet schools were outside of the geographic pattern of their days. While magnets worked with some job locations, they did not work in the same way for all parents. Choosing a magnet required a commitment to the school and to the inconvenience it might require for transportation. With the exception of Michelle and Darla, parents did not tend to deconstruct why magnets were located in particular areas, or why housing developments or new business districts had grown in certain areas. Most did not consider their previous choices of work or housing as part of the reason they were led to a certain set of school choices.

**Sibling Preference**

Keeping the family together, or family cohesion and unity, also factored heavily in the
decisions. As parents with more than one child considered schooling, they looked at all of their children together as one unit rather than as individuals. Parents articulated that their concern for family unity was motivated by both logistics and equity among siblings. Parents, middle class in particular, had great anxiety about their children being placed in different schools, and many parents turned away from the public schools because of the fear that their children would be placed in separate schools. Parents wanted the whole family to be part of the same school community, and they wanted to offer the "same experience" for each of their children. Issues of equity among siblings were frequently discussed. For parents who could not afford private school, significant time and resources were employed to try to gain access for all of their children to attend school together. The most common concern for participants enrolling in JCPS was the lack of sibling guarantee in the student assignment plan. With the exception of twins, siblings are not guaranteed placement. The exact wording of the elementary school application bulletin reads:

Parents of siblings who share the same birth date (twins, triplets, etc.) who are applying to a traditional magnet school or program must submit a separate application for each child, but these applications will be treated as one application. Traditional schools do not give priority to siblings of students previously enrolled. Because most students enter a traditional school or program in kindergarten, openings may be limited in other grades. If seats are available, traditional magnet schools and programs use a random drawing to determine which students will be accepted. Applications will be included in a random
drawing only if you list a traditional school or program as a student’s first choice on the application. (JCPS, Choices Brochure, 2011).

When pressed about why sibling preference was so important, parents discussed the practicalities of transportation to one school as well as the lack of time to be an involved parent in more than one school. Many also discussed attending the same school as an issue of fairness among siblings because although all of the schools in Jefferson County have adequate facilities, they offer different programs, physical equipment and courses, depending on location and theme. Schools in more suburban areas have larger campuses and more outside play areas and schools in the city have smaller outside areas. However, many of the schools downtown in the West End, especially magnet schools have specialized programs, equipment or instruction, such as the Suzuki music program at the Brown School. Additionally, there are wide differences in the test scores of schools and parents were cognizant of the differences in academic outcomes. When they discussed offering the same experience to their children, they often referred to both programmatic offerings and academic quality as measured by test scores. Of all of the topics we discussed sibling placement was the most emotional topic, with many parents tearing up over the possibility that their children would be separated.

Barbara started by discussing sibling placement as a practical matter that was about keeping her family running smoothly and her life manageable.
I am making a decision for all three kids with this first one – because you want to keep things as simple as possible to make it work for your family. -Barbara

For Barbara, this meant not applying to any of the magnet schools or to the traditional program that she liked, because on her visits to those schools, the competitiveness of the admission process was stressed. She learned how hard it was to get accepted to the magnet schools, and although she was impressed with the offerings she did not even fill out the magnet application because she believed that all of her sons would be unlikely to be accepted. She ultimately decided that having all three of her boys at a mediocre school was better than having one or two at one of the fabulous magnet schools. When asked if she would consider the magnet schools if they guaranteed placement, she said,

it would've been on the table, I mean I was very inclined to go the traditional route. Carter was the traditional school serving our cluster and that would've been an option but they do not guarantee placement for siblings so that took that off the table. So the extra special programs mean nothing to me if I can't guarantee that they all get in there. – Barbara

When I pressed Barbara by saying that the schools say it is likely that siblings will get in, she protests and says,

yes, I was told by the district, oh, you will probably get all three of them in. Don't worry about that but there's still that variation. There is still that uncertainty.
And I thought I need to remove as much uncertainty from this process as possible. You can tell me that now but the parent that bought their houses on the East End did not foresee the economic collapse that meant a lot of people pull their kids out of their private schools and had to put them in the public schools and that pushed up the number of kids in the east end resides school and they did not anticipate that they would be going there so I don’t want to deal with that uncertainty... I don’t want to be sitting here in four years with two kids in Carter and one in a school I don’t like. - Barbara

As Barbara was pressed about this choice, she revealed that this decision was also rooted in her experience of unequal education in her own childhood. As the youngest child of five, she benefitted from her mother's going back to school to become a teacher. She was able to attend the private Catholic school where her mother was employed, while her older siblings had all attended the local public school in the rural area where she grew up. She felt that her superior education led her to be the only child in her family who attended college directly after high school. She knew that she received a better education, and she did not feel that this was fair to her siblings.

I benefited so much from being the last kid and I got a great education that was impossible or unavailable to my sisters. – Barbara

Many parents in the study did not apply to traditional or magnet schools because of the lack of sibling preference. When Jane was explaining her feelings about sibling preference, she said,
I think that would be really difficult to have your children at two different schools and that was one thing that I was concerned about in applying to a place like Brandeis or the traditional schools and I remember this because I knew my other son would be one year behind him and from what I’ve heard that there is no sibling preference and I mean I just think that would be really hard I mean what would you do if the first child was accepted and then you did not get your second one in, you know, would you take one out or would you have them in two different schools. That would be really difficult. I did have a tour set up at Audubon and I just decided I’m not going to the tour because if they can’t go together then it is not going to work. – Jane

Kagan was also interested in Brandeis and the traditional schools for her twin boys, but was worried about the logistics of taking her sons to two different schools. In weighing her decision between Brandeis and Audubon Traditional she said,

I don’t know and for me it is particularly difficult because for one of them he will do fabulously in the traditional program and that is probably what he needs and the other one I think he needs Brandeis, he would do fabulously there - but logistically I cannot have them in two different schools so at the end of the day I am just going to have to figure out which one is going to work best for them. So I don't know what the best answer is. In an ideal world one would go to Brandeis and one would go to Audubon but I just can't make it work. - Kagan
The Brown School, a school that has a progressive curriculum and a Suzuki music education program, was very popular among parents in the study but most parents did not even apply to the school because of the competition for admissions that was stressed in their materials and in their campus tours, and what that would mean for placing their second child at Brown. Creighton said about her visit to Brown,

Brown was very clear about that it was your zip code. And if your zip code gets full you don’t get in and they were very explicit…I did not apply there because if one kid gets in there I want to be able to send the other one and they told me the exact same thing that St. Agnes told me – no guarantee for her sister.

– Creighton

To follow up, I asked Creighton if this is why she did not choose Brown on her application. She replied,

yes, that’s true and because it would burn up our number one choice. I thought they were also a little bit snotty about that whole thing. They kind of had a like, “No, we are Brown.” Attitude, like if you are lucky enough to be chosen by our electronic computerized system…if you are in the right zip code, you know just that attitude. –Creighton

Darla also described a similar attitude at Brown and from the people who had attended Brown. When she first investigated the school, she thought that it was THE choice for her child, but then an acquaintance told her that as a white person from the highlands she would have no chance of getting into Brown. According to this person, “Every white person in the Highlands wants to go to Brown,” and the spots are rationed by zip code.
Darla knew from this information that it would be unlikely for her to get both children into Brown. She took a different tack, and decided to apply to a magnet which usually had open spots, Coleridge Taylor, where she enrolled her son. When discussing her son’s younger sister, she said,

She is going to Coleridge Taylor. That is where she’s going to go. They have somewhat a sibling preference there. Coleridge Taylor as a magnet, I mean it is fairly popular but they do have open spots, I think. I mean all of us that have kids there have siblings and they have assured us that it is not going to be an issue. –Darla

Darla chose to believe school officials that there would be a spot for her second child where other parents were not willing to take the chance that their second child could attend. These parents chose to avoid magnet schools or to apply later when all the children could apply at the same time. Darla was told that there was always room for siblings at Coleridge Taylor, while all of the participants who went on the Brown tour or talked with the Brown school officials at the Showcase of Schools were discouraged from thinking that more than one child would get a place in the school. The school district does not publish any statistics about the number of younger siblings who get accepted to Brown when an older sibling attends.

Sage was similarly discouraged from enrolling her older daughter at Brown. She decided to wait until she could apply for both of her children at the same time. Sage chose to enroll her daughter in a private Catholic school until her son was ready to go to kindergarten. She had volunteered at the Brown School when she was in high school
and she loved the school, but she wanted her daughter to go there only if her son could go there as well.

The only school I am really interested in is the Brown school... The only reason I didn’t try for it when my daughter was going into kindergarten was that there is no sibling preference, so I just couldn’t do it. I had to wait until I could apply for both of them in the same year. I just could not imagine having my one child at this awesome school and then just leaving my other child out. I won’t consider any school unless they are both accepted to it. I filled out their applications exactly the same. The first consideration is placing them together. I won’t do it any other way. It is just not practical. -Sage

When Sage visited Brown and told them she was applying for a kindergartner and a second grader she was told that her chances were slim, as very few students leave Brown and there were at times no spots available at the upper grade levels. She was told that her son might get a spot in kindergarten but that likely her daughter would not get accepted. When they were both denied a place at Brown, Sage chose to enroll her son in the same Catholic school her daughter attended.

**Extended Family**

The impact of the family on the world view of parents and children cannot be over-emphasized, as parents continually revisited their opinions and values about schools through the eyes and influences of their extended family, primarily grandparents and siblings. Extended family influenced participants' ideas not only about the ingredients
of a good education, but also in providing the logistical support necessary to make transportation to or funding for school possible. Grandparents often exerted considerable influence and assistance to ensure that their grandchildren would receive an excellent education. The class status of the family often dictated how that support could be offered. For Ella, who lived paycheck to paycheck, her support for her grandchildren’s education, the ones who lived with her and the ones who lived with their parents, came through advice and encouragement about the value of education. She talked about what this meant for her family:

That is why I tell my kids to do their best – to try – to ask questions. Because when I got older I had to go to school myself and I would not have had to do that if when I was coming up the teachers had worked with me better than they did. When I got into middle school I could barely read or spell. They just passed me to get rid of me. It was hard. It was hard to make it and I don’t want them to have to struggle and that is the reason I want them to do their best and actually for them to learn and I don’t want them to struggle in life and I do not want them to just pass them on. With all of my grandchildren, I tell them if you feel like you are not learning then ask. And if you feel like they are not teaching you then we need to step it up because it is hard. I said when I was a grownup I had to get adult education because even though I graduated, it still wasn’t there because everybody learns differently. – Ella

Ella used what she learned about education through her own struggles to encourage her extended family to get what they could out of their public school education. Her
material resources did not allow her to pay for tutors or private schools for her grandchildren, but she could encourage them to ask for help and to advocate for themselves. She could give them the language they needed to navigate the school system. Ella was also available to provide child care for the grandchildren she did not have custody of and was able to provide support to their parents in terms of transportation. However, her help was limited by her economic situation, and she could not offer the same type of assistance offered by wealthier grandparents.

For upper middle class families, help from grandparents came through providing informal child care and transportation and in some cases financial support. Grandparents often advised parents on schooling options, with both solicited and unsolicited advice and warnings. Many grandparents were invested in their grandchildren’s receiving a superior education by gaining access to great schools. Financial support from families included assistance with the down payments on homes in good neighborhoods to access high quality public schools, as well as assistance with the tuition for private schools. Because some clusters have more high-performing schools than others, cluster choice was important in getting access to a higher performing school. In addition, many of these transplant parents made decisions about housing prior to the advent of the new school assignment plan or were unaware of the history of busing and assumed they would be assigned to their neighborhood school. Grandparents were heavily invested in maintaining or gaining class privilege through education for their grandchildren.
Angie, who was very worried about the quality of the public schools in her area, was leaning heavily towards private schools and chose to keep her daughter in private kindergarten at her nursery school until she could come up with a plan that would work for both children. She thought help from the grandparents might be a possibility. In talking about the consideration of private school she said,

I did hear my husband talking to his dad on the phone about it last night. So I mean my parents have said if that's where you want her to go then we will help make that happen for you and I don't know if his dad was saying similar things. My grandparents have said the same thing so I don't think it's out of possibility if other people can help pay for it then you know we would definitely figure it out. If everybody could make a payment then we could make it happen. If everybody can take rounds. -Angie

Angie’s extended family, grandparents and great grandparents, were willing to invest in private school tuition to make that a reality for Angie’s children. Other grandparents helped with down payments on houses in good neighborhoods because they believed that the location of the house would secure high-quality schooling and a safe neighborhood for their grandchildren. They did not anticipate that the assignment plan would disturb this connection between neighborhood and school. Marcy talked about the assistance she and her husband received after a job loss to get a home for her family in a middle class neighborhood in the East End:
we ended up through a lot of work and some help from family to be in a position to take advantage of the low interest rates to buy a home so I can't say that moving was only driven by the school or anything like that. – Marcy

Marcy’s assistance from her family allowed her to move to a higher income neighborhood and a larger home.

Susan talked about grandparent assistance in terms of support for a sick child or transportation. Because Susan works full-time, it is important that her in-laws are able to provide support for her children as well. When thinking about where to buy her home, she considered where her in-laws lived.

but traveling down Hurstbourne Lane, that takes a really long time. So if I have a sick child or need any backup care and then you drive downtown to get to work. It would just be too much so we wanted to get closer to our in-laws for that type of support and we also did some research and a friend of mine had a sister that that lived in the neighborhood where we live now and she knew where we lived and she said you know the school in our neighborhood is an excellent public school. - Susan

Locating close to grandparent help was important to Susan, and it was an important consideration in choosing the neighborhood and school for her child. She talked a great deal about getting advice from her in-laws and their friends about the schools in Louisville. The impressions of family members and their advice about schools weighed heavily on participants and at times moved them to choose particular schools or sets of
This use of social networks connects to Bourdieu’s idea of social capital: that actors maintain their position in the social hierarchy in part by the informal sharing of information about the "right" choices to make to secure class/race privilege.

Like Susan, who had in-laws who lived in Louisville, Felicia had both parents and in-laws who lived in Louisville and had opinions about the school choices. Felicia’s father was a former school district administrator, who supported her decision to enroll his granddaughter in a private Catholic school.

I just think his main concern being Catholic was just he wanted her to be in a class where that class was not going to be disruptive and that the teacher would just end up being focused on the behavior of the disruptive kids. He wanted her in a small class so I think that our decision was a decision that he was very happy with. So, yeah, he was in the Jefferson County schools but he was not so much a player as far as you should send her here but he just wanted her to be in a place where he knew she could learn. – Felicia

Grandparents’ perceptions of schools and their ability support parents financially with the down payment for the home or through paying the tuition bill for private schools allowed middle class families to be in a position to take advantage of the high-performing schools in the Louisville Metro area and to gain access to the private school market. The decisions and assistance from grandparents reinforced race/class privilege, as grandparents influenced participants to choose schools that offered access to a
privileged educational experience. The materiality of the participant’s lives constructed their social realities and set of choices. As Maton (2008) describes of Bourdieu:

It is our material conditions of existence that generate our innumerable experiences of possibilities and impossibilities, probable and improbable outcomes, that in turn shape our unconscious sense of possible, probable, and crucially, desirable for us. We learn, in short, our rightful place in the social world, where we will do best given our dispositions and resources, and also where we will struggle (p. 58).

Parents thought about what was possible and impossible for them based upon their social location and in a sense the choices that were probable became the choices that “made sense.” Parents saw these choices as the natural ones, the desirable ones, because those choices fit into the culture or *habitus* of their household and their extended family. They did not in general describe these decisions as manipulations for privilege but rather as great opportunities that they, of course, would take advantage of. Most parents in the study did not, in general, connect these choices to privilege.

**What is right for a kindergartner?**

Participants often spoke about the age of elementary age students when they begin kindergarten as an important consideration in how to navigate the schooling options. Often the conversation with parents would turn to the individual needs of their children and what the parents perceived about their capabilities at the age of five or six. These considerations worked in tandem with the logistical needs of the parents.
Winona talked about her commitment to sending her daughter to a diverse school. She admitted that this was possible only because the logistics of transportation fit with her idea of what a kindergartner was capable of bearing in terms of transportation. Because she lived in Germantown, close to downtown, her child’s commute on the bus was short.

She just takes one bus and to be honest if they had her switching buses, I would just drive her to school because I think she's too young to switch buses. She is too young to be doing all that. I mean we live close, we live really close. Her bus is like 20 minutes but I would not want her to be on the bus for longer than 30 minutes. – Winona

Although Winona sees the diverse magnet school as a possibility because the bus ride is short, the choice of housing also reflects her values. When asked about why she chose to live in Germantown, Winona described liking the diversity of Germantown and its proximity to the eclectic Highlands area. Her diversity values reflected in her housing choice made a schooling choice that was also diverse a more realistic possibility. However, she did avoid enrolling in the diverse reside school in her neighborhood, which had a greater percentage of students of color and students on free and reduced lunch.

Winona was not the only one who felt that long bus rides for young children were inappropriate. Ella, a grandmother who is raising three of her grandchildren, describes her feelings about kindergartners riding buses:
I just don't like it. I just don't think that little kids should be riding the compound buses. I don't think that little kids should be on compound buses because when they are five or six years old, when they are in kindergarten or first grade I think that it is just too young for kids to be on compound buses\(^\text{17}\) because they just started out. This is their first year in school and they have to go on two different buses. And then they have to get up extra early to get on them buses because my five-year-old grandkids this is their first year going to kindergarten and they are on two separate buses and they were scared to death to get onto the buses and they cried the whole time and I would tell their mama they are too young to ride two separate buses they are too scared. They're going to get lost and you hear it all the time where kids get on the wrong bus, for instance my seven-year-old grandson they lost him the first day of school; they put him on the wrong bus. –Ella

For those parents who were assigned schools a long distance from their homes, the bus rides were often avoided by using private transportation. These parents also stated that using private transportation was the only way to make the school assignment work. Laurel, whose child was assigned to Coleridge Taylor, a magnet school she did not want her child to attend, talks about their decision to drive their child to school instead of using the bus:

\(^{17}\) The compound buses involved a student riding two different buses to school; boarding the first bus near their home and then being transported to a central compound where the student would then board a new bus to be taken to school. The central compound allowed for a more efficient use of buses.
She wants to ride the bus but both my husband I rode the bus and we hated it – I didn’t look into it but it would have to be at least an hour. It would have to be such a hike. I told her someday if you want to drive an hour to a job you can but when you are a child I get to make the choice – no kid needs to be commuting two hours per day. – Laurel

Laurel did not explain in detail why she did not look into the actual bus assignment for her child. She explained that she had heard from others that the location of her house in the East End would likely have meant a compound bus ride for her daughter, and that was enough information for her to stop investigating the bus as an option; she did not feel that was an appropriate choice for her child. Instead, she worked out a car-pooling arrangement with another child in the East End who was attending Coleridge Taylor.

Marcy’s child was also assigned to a school downtown that was not her choice. Although she ultimately ended up enrolling the child in a private school, she had an opinion to share about the impact of busing on kindergartners:

They should have never started it with kindergartners. Kindergartners are not equipped for the bus ride and it all comes down to that. They are not equipped for the bus ride. Not all kindergartners, I don’t know maybe some are but not MY six-year-old. I know that. – Marcy

Marcy was worried about her son’s ability to handle a long commute with minimal supervision. She felt that he would have trouble riding on the bus that long. She knew
that the situation would not work for her child and she chose to enroll in a Catholic school instead.

Mary, when asked about whether she would send her daughter to Byck or Wheatley, responded that she would not send her daughter there and then added,

And it is not about the quality of education there – I have heard good things about Byck, and the other one I don’t know about – it is just that I want my small child – my very small child close to home. And I want to be able to attend as much as I can with the functions and I want to volunteer. Time is of the essence and driving, driving, driving and going downtown with rush hour traffic – it is just not practical. - Mary

The length of the commute for small children and the possibility of having to switch buses for a kindergartener were overwhelming to almost all of the parents in the study. Parents expressed resistance to the idea that bus commutes or transfers were appropriate for five-year-olds and often framed this opinion as their parenting belief or style. In essence, they looked at this decision about what is age-appropriate as a family decision about the values of individual families.

Summary

As parents made choices based upon logistics and values of the family, the ultimate decisions tended to reproduce race/class privilege, yet most parents did not consciously
frame it as such. This subconscious reproduction of privilege is described by Dimitriadis (2006):

Social actors develop a certain “feel for the game” of any field, which enables them to act more or less automatically. This is what Bourdieu refers to as “embodied learning,” through which trained actions are not the result of logical reasoning but occur through processes that take place outside conscious control (Dimitriadis, 2006, p. 67).

Parents viewed their decisions in large part as a function of transportation, family cohesiveness and family values about children’s needs. Extended family offered supporting advice and assistance that reinforced the “natural” feeling of the decision they had already made. The assent and offer of real support reified the logic of an automatic decision. It is not a coincidence that the logic of proximity, sibling preference, support of family and expressions about what is right for a kindergartner led parents to inevitably consider a set of school choices in which the majority of the schools matched their own class/race identity. The majority of parents took great pains to avoid discussions of race or class, and when race was introduced in the interview protocol, parents distanced themselves from even noticing it. They employed a “color-blind” view of the world and would forefront these logistical decisions as the primary factors in choosing a school. From a policy perspective, the consistent distancing from blatant racism and classism is important, as it appears that parents would rather discuss logistics, purporting that if an assignment policy was more logistically feasible, then they would consider a different set of choices from the ones they ultimately chose. The
logistics of sibling preference and transportation to before-care and from after-care are issues that could be addressed by the assignment policy. The ultimate question, however, is whether these logistics are the only barrier to considering a more diverse set of schools. As parents began discussing neighborhoods and housing decisions, the places they chose to locate their family, as well as discussions of race and class, became more apparent.
Chapter Five: NEIGHBORHOOD

“I mean these women are just not like me.”

Bourdieu describes the transmission of cultural capital through the construction of taste within the social classes. For Bourdieu, what we like and who we choose to surround ourselves with is socially constructed by our own class identity – and we reproduce that class in our children. “Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). For parents in the study, choosing a neighborhood or school community is often centered on finding what they termed "like-minded" friends for themselves and their children and choosing neighborhoods where they feel comfortable; in making those choices parents reproduce for their children a world that reifies their family’s taste in clothing, food and ways of living in general. These choices of residence and community of friends ensure a social life that normalizes ways of being, which are then enacted by their children as “natural.” The tastes, interests and even ways of speaking and moving are coded as particular classes. The social hierarchy that exists can be structured or made manifest by the observations of these tastes and preferences.

Taste in neighborhoods and schools reflect the social class, both economic and racial, of the participants. As parents made decisions about schools and distinctions among neighborhoods, they most often recreated their own class/race identity yet refrained from explicitly talking about race or class. Their talk of neighborhoods took on a "color-blind" ideology from which explicit mentions of race were largely absent.
Distinct perceptions of neighborhood and community factored significantly in the testimony of participants in the study, who had strong ideas about their need for community and how they could create it. These ideas differed among participants based upon geography, past experiences with schooling, racial identity and class identity. Because the participants came from every area of Louisville, the perceptions of the same neighborhoods ranged from openness to fear. Concerns were raised about physical and emotional safety, as well as fears about not being welcomed or about being left out of the community. Many of the participants interviewed talked specifically about the neighborhood and school as places to find community. For most parents that choice meant they were looking for people like them. Some parents actively sought diversity that would broaden their child’s view of the world. For many African American parents in the study, the search for diversity was an effort to find peers who would affirm their child’s racial identity.

Parents described searching for neighborhoods that would fit them, places where they would feel comfortable. Very few parents talked about searching for a home in terms of house style or amenities. Most talked about geography and style of neighborhood and the community that neighborhood created. Prior knowledge of neighborhoods differed partly on prior exposure to Louisville. Participants used various means to learn about Louisville neighborhoods. Half of the participants in the study were native Louisvillians, and the other half were transplants from elsewhere. Half of these transplants were married to native Louisvillians. For those participants from Louisville or those who had spouses from Louisville, knowledge about neighborhoods
came from prior exposure to or experience with neighborhoods. However, others merely relied on rumors. When participants told me about what the West End was like, I would ask about their own experiences there, and often they admitted that they had never actually been to the West End. Spouses of natives tended to crowd-source opinions on neighborhoods, constantly asking people about places to live and what they knew about them. Transplants were less knowledgeable about neighborhoods and depended on real estate agents, online information, and suggestions from transfer specialists at their workplaces or new work colleagues to gather information about neighborhoods. One mother used an HGTV cable program that followed a couple buying a house in Louisville to help her pick her neighborhood. As the interviews progressed, areas of town emerged as having particular identities. Participants spoke at length about perceptions of four distinct areas of town which were consistently named the South End, the West End/Downtown, the East End, and the Highlands. Choosing to move out of a particular area of town, or avoiding schools in an area had much to do with perception and experience. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to describing these four areas of town and participants' experiences in the communities and schools within these areas.

Southie

When people in Louisville refer to the South End, they are roughly talking about the area south of 264 and west of highway 65, although adjacent areas east of 65 along the Dixie Highway Corridor are also considered South End neighborhoods. Fairdale, Okolona,
and Pleasure Ridge Park were all areas consistently named by the participants as located in the South End, the exact boundaries of the South End varied somewhat by participant. The median income levels for most of the zip codes in the South End hover around $40,000 but dip as low as $26,000 and stretch up to $53,000 in the more easterly portion on the eastern side of highway 65 (JCPS, Elementary Data Set, 2012).

The South End has historically consisted of white working class neighborhoods. In recent years that demographic has changed as immigrant groups from Somalia and Latin America relocated to this area of town, and African Americans from the West End moved into the southwest region as populations have grown. The South End has the greatest concentration of whites at its most southern end. This area of town was both embraced and resisted by participants in the study. Five participants who experience(d) living in the South End will be discussed. Two participants currently live in the South End and are trying to invest in their local school to make it better while two of the participants specifically moved out of the south end to avoid South End schools. The fifth participant, an African American mother of five, is still trying to find her place in the South End.

Rosie, who grew up and attended high school in the South End, bought her first home there in order to be close to her parents. She decided to move when her daughter entered kindergarten because of her perception of the quality of the schools in the South End. Rosie moved three different times after getting married; the first two times she purchased a home in the South End because of the proximity to her parents and to a child care provider that she wanted to use when her children were infants.
When she started thinking about sending her children to school, these reasons became secondary to the quality of the neighborhood and the local public school.

We lived there, well, I’m trying to think, I think about 3 1/2 or four years and we decided to move because we did not like the school system for our cluster. There were not any good options within that cluster, well in terms of reputation. Our resides school would have been Stonestreet Elementary and it had been on the news that it was a troubled school. We saw this, I don't remember exactly when, but it was a couple years ago at this point but they were in trouble in terms of their test scores and then a little bit about reputation from people that we knew that went to those schools. We also looked up which schools were in our cluster on the JCPS website and then you could research them online to see what their test scores are... On the great schools website, I just remember looking mainly at the parent comments and the JCPS site that has the scores and I cannot think about all the things they talk about but one is how many speak English as their first language and you know I don't know how many students are at a certain level of reading and I can't remember exactly what all the metrics are but it was a report card that debriefs about all the different schools. And when I looked at it Stonestreet, I just thought that it was not a good school but I also just mostly took that from other parents, and like they were not happy with their teachers for their children and they were not happy with the principal like those kinds of comments and I think somebody told me at one point that there were several children a friend of mine told me and there were several kids that did not
speak English and they were having a hard time integrating the rest of the kids while they were working with those kids. - Rosie

When I asked Rosie if there were a lot of English as Second language students in her neighborhood, she replied that there were not, but that the clusters can be very large and she did not think that those kids lived near her. According to the JCPS data site, there are 59 English as Second Language (ESL) students out of 490 total students attending Stonestreet, and about half of those ESL students are African or Black. When I probed a little further about her neighborhood Rosie commented,

well, that was just one factor but we also just thought that in the neighborhood there was a general decline and maybe that housing values were not growing as fast in that area so the school was not our only deciding factor although it was a large one but that was part of it and then some local violence around the area and we just were not comfortable with that…– Rosie

After considering the neighborhood and what she had heard and read about the schools in her South End neighborhood, Rosie and her husband decided to look for a home in the East End. They restricted their home search to houses in Cluster Five because they felt that this cluster had the most high achieving schools (as measured by test scores) and was centrally located enough that they would have access to the highways in order to travel around the metro area for their jobs.

Kagan also moved out of the south end to avoid the schools and the neighborhood influence. When she first moved to Louisville, she was not familiar with
the neighborhoods. Her choice of buying a home in the South End was dictated by her husband’s familiarity with the area, as he had been raised there and still had family on the south side. After living there for a while, Kagan decided that this was not the type of peer group she wanted for her children. When I asked why she moved out of that first house she said,

We started thinking about schools for the kids. Realized we really didn’t want them in South End schools - at the time we were thinking St. Margaret Mary<sup>18</sup> - we wanted to be closer to St. Margaret Mary and we had a chance to get out of that house so we took it...No offense to the south end’s schools but they are not the top academically - with my husband being a Doss<sup>19</sup> grad - we tend to see that kind of thing, well, the general population of those schools are not what we wanted for our children. - Kagan

I probed this response and asked her about the general population of the schools; I wanted to know what she meant by general population, and she responded,

Just the kids and the families that we saw out there, just the kind of environment they were around was different than we wanted for our kids. We decided that we needed a **different environment** for our kids than the one out in the south end. You know several times we would go to baseball games and I know parents act an ass everywhere but baby mama drama shows up and they are fighting

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<sup>18</sup> St. Margaret Mary is a private Catholic School. It is one of the most expensive private schools in Louisville and has very competitive admissions.

<sup>19</sup> Doss is a high school in the south end.
over another girlfriend and I don't want my kids to be involved in that sort of white trash redneck crap...—Kagan

Kagan talks specifically about the style of communication in the public events she attended in the South End and her feeling of discomfort at what she saw. She knew that she did not want her sons in an atmosphere that would teach them that this was the appropriate way to behave. Kagan uses the words “white trash,” and “redneck” to describe the behavior of the women, making explicit her social markers for these women. Her recognition of ways of speaking and the ways these communication styles are marked as class specific demonstrate the subtle ways in which class is coded in modern society. This is Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical description of this phenomenon, Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (p.6).

Kagan defines their activities and manners of speaking as vulgar and distinguishes herself from these women. Her search for a new neighborhood was an effort to find a place where she would find a community of people who reflected the values and tastes of her occupational position, as a professional woman. Kagan wanted, in particular to indicate that escaping the South End was an issue of economic class, and a chance for her to find "better" influences for her children. Her resistance to the style of women in the South End came after much of our discussions about logistics, transportation and
sibling preferences. As in most of the interviews, discussions about being
uncomfortable in certain neighborhoods or schools did not occur until the second half of
the interview, after at least forty minutes of talk.

While Rosie and Kagan chose to leave the South End to gain access to better
schools, both Barbara and Christie took pride in their South End community and sought
to improve their area schools. Although Barbara and Christie live in different parts of
the South End, they both defined themselves in opposition to East-Enders. Both
Barbara and Christie were aware of the perceptions of the South End and both
expressed frustration with how the south end had been abandoned by the city,
businesses, and the school district.

Frankly in our cluster – in the south west side – no one is banging on the doors.
That is a problem for East End folks. I think the problem for us will be more in the
coming years figuring out how to push to make the schools and our area of town
better and that goes for pretty much everything on the Southwest side and I
think we're kind of the redheaded stepchildren of Louisville so it will be
interesting to see what happens because there does seem to be so little interest
in improving the Dixie corridor and I think when that starts to happen I think all
of the indicators of life on the Southwest side will probably begin to improve. –
Barbara
Barbara's frustration with the perceptions of her side of town translated into a dissatisfaction with the treatment the South End received and a stubborn pride in what her neighborhood could offer if given the chance.

we could not even get a Kohl's, a Kohl's, I mean Kohl’s is like a department store for poor people, and we could not get it – they looked at Dixie corridor and said no, and I am thinking you’re kidding me, we can't even get a Kohl’s. In retail we have two Dollar Generals, maybe three Advanced Auto Parts, and a Waffle House. And I just think that somebody has dropped the ball on selling this area of town because we can pull from Mead County because people come up from Brandenburg and shop and from Fort Knox because people live here and commute to Fort Knox because it's a little more cosmopolitan here than Elizabethtown, which I think is hilarious. We finally got a Wal-Mart on Dixie Highway. – Barbara

Barbara recognized that her area of town was not desirable to others, but she preferred this area over other areas and wanted to see her children enrolled in the schools in the South End. Although Barbara saw the weaknesses in the schools, she did not consider applying for schools downtown, even the downtown schools with high test scores. She was annoyed that she had to put two A schools on her application.

if my kid is going to be assigned to a crappy school, I would rather he be assigned to the crappy school in my backyard than a crappy school across town. – Barbara
Barbara recognizes that the assignment plan does not guarantee the first choice school, so it is possible that the student will be assigned to the third or fourth choice school, and she is not comfortable with her child's attending a low-achieving school downtown.

Whereas Barbara was worried about the lack of attention to the South End by the business community and developers, Christie felt that the policies of the Jefferson County School District were doing a disservice to the schools in her area of town. When she considered the education options in her neighborhood, she noticed that there were fewer special programs and advanced programs in her neighborhood schools, whereas the downtown and West End had magnet schools with specialized programs and facilities.

They don’t have a magnet and they don’t have an AP so why would you send your kid from say the West End to Moore, why would you do it- what would be the incentive? Because there was no incentive – you would send them to your home school – which probably had an AP or a magnet. Because in essence JCPS is killin’ my area of town. What do we have to offer? We got nothing.

My kid goes to Noe downtown and makes Noe a better school and it is socialized busing. You are taking my middle class – my white middle class kid from a two parent household with college degrees and you are making that test score down there better. That is what you are doing– there is no way that this is not what is happening. You are going – ‘AAAHH - This little girl will improve my test scores.– Christie
When Christie considered the elementary schools in her neighborhood for her younger daughter she was not as worried about special programs. When her older daughter started considering middle school, the lack of special programs or special facilities in the neighborhood middle school sharply contrasted with the high-tech, renovated dining hall and special educational programs offered at the magnet middle school downtown. When she toured the middle schools with her daughter, she started asking about this discrepancy among the traditional, neighborhood and performing arts magnet schools.

it should be equal – there should not be this – we don’t have AP\textsuperscript{20} or we don’t offer a magnet but we have AP. It should not be that way. So I asked – because we went and toured the traditional school—TMS and I asked that principal and he said “we all teach the same curriculum ma’am” and I said if you all teach the same curriculum how come Noe has time to teach dance, ballet and drama and you give two hours of homework every night – it says that right here in your brochure and Moore does not have AP or magnet but you all teach the same curriculum? And he said “all I can tell you is that we all teach the same curriculum.

And I say it is not – there is no way that it can be – how can it be? - Christie

Christie was trying to figure out why she could not find a good middle school in her area of town and was concerned about the distribution of resources to the different schools. As a longtime resident of the South End, she had heard bad things about the schools in

\textsuperscript{20} Advanced Placement curriculum offered through the College Board.
her neighborhood – low test scores and "bad" kids. When I asked her about the specific comments she had heard about the middle school in her neighborhood, she said,

I have just heard that they still have the same reputation they used to – a bunch of trouble makers – a bunch of hoodlums and I say that knowing that I have two friends who have kids that go there and they are great kids but I still have not stepped into the building. And I have driven past it for the last seven years. – Christie

Christie viewed the South End as a place where she was both at home and suspect of neighborhood children. She ended up sending her elder daughter to Noe\textsuperscript{21} downtown for middle school, in part because she felt that the community of students her child would be around would be a better influence. However, she sent both of her daughters to Smyrna Elementary in the South End because of the quality of the school and the cohesiveness of the neighborhood community. She felt that the teachers and staff knew her and the other parents well and were welcoming of their involvement. She relayed a story about the staff secretary calling her about what to do with a friend’s sick child because she could not get a hold of the mom. She felt that this was a good indication of how well she and her daughters were known at Smyrna. Her experience in the South End may have differed from Barbara’s because of the location and

\textsuperscript{21} Noe is the middle school performing arts magnet school located near the University of Louisville. It feeds into DuPont Manuel High School, which is one of the highest ranked high schools in the state of Kentucky. Attending Noe drastically increases the chance of getting into Manuel High School. 50% of Noe students come from the area surrounding the school which is largely African American and poor; the other 50% of students come as magnet students like Christie’s daughter, largely white and middle class, from all over Jefferson County.
comparative wealth of her neighborhood. Although Smyrna is in the South End of Louisville, it is more centrally located, being further east than the Dixie Highway corridor with a higher income and education level than the elementary resides closer to the Dixie Highway corridor (Elementary Data Book, JCPS). Christie, however, did differentiate herself from East Enders, saying, she “just didn’t grow up with that way.” When I asked her to elaborate, she didn’t offer a further explanation. She just thought of East Enders as people who were not like her. She reiterated that the South End was where she felt comfortable, yet she also took the time to explain to me the relative wealth of her neighborhood in the South End. Indeed, the average home price in her neighborhood was much higher than the average home price in the South End.

While the South End had a neighborhood feel for Christie and Barbara, other parents did not feel welcome there. Parts of the South End were discussed by African American parents as places they would not feel comfortable living. Felicia, a college educated professional African American woman, who refrained from expanding on why when I asked her, listed Pleasure Ridge Park and Valley Station as places she would not feel comfortable living, although she quickly added, “I just don’t know those areas very well.” Felicia was reluctant to describe any area or particular group of people as unwelcoming to her because she was African-American. She resisted labeling people or areas of town as racist. However, her feeling that she might not be welcome in these areas has historical roots. During the first desegregation order, protests against busing were held mainly in the South End, and white students held a walk-out at three South End high schools: Fairdale High School, Pleasure Ridge Park High School and Southern
High School (K'Meyer, 2009, p. 255). Although Felicia did not specifically mention these events, this area of town was the first she mentioned as a place where she would not feel comfortable. Because she grew up in Louisville, and she lived in Louisville at the time, it is likely that she knew about these events had at least heard of the reputation of the South End as intolerant of African Americans. Interestingly, Felicia like the other professional African-American women in the study, distanced herself from labeling people or parts of town as racist. Contrary to Bonilla-Silva's (2010) work, which held that blacks in his study did not ascribe to a color-blind ideology and were willing to call out racism, my data reveal "color-blind" narratives from high-achieving blacks as well. Bonilla-Silva's asserts that black people state their views on racism clearly and are not hesitant to reveal discrimination, I found that there was a class difference in this sort of revelation. The professional African-Americans in the study did not discuss racism and refrained from discussing discrimination when probed, whereas the working class African Americans in my study were very forthright about discussing racial discrimination. Bonilla - Silva (2010) stated that blacks "believe discrimination is a central factor shaping their life chances in this country" (p. 171). Felicia and two other black professionals took great pains to frame their lives around opportunity rather than discrimination. In her 2003 work on social class and family life, Lareau also witnessed a distancing from racism with her professional African American participants and detailed an experience of watching one of her participants being harassed by a shopkeeper and the subsequent minimization of this interaction by her participant. The woman refused to label the incident as racism. I have heard similar sentiments expressed by my upper
class African American students in my courses at two different private colleges in upstate New York. In writings reflecting on identity, many of my upper class African American students discuss their racial identity as an advantage, something that has helped them to succeed. They did not talk about society as racist, and they articulated their lives as part of the realization of a "color-blind" society. This distancing from an understanding of institutionalized racism drastically differs from the testimony of low income African Americans in the courses I teach and in this study. It is important to be mindful of my own identity in these interactions. Like Lareau, I am a white woman and in my research interactions that identity is read by my participants. It is highly possible that I am not privy to the discourse around how racism shapes the experiences of professional African Americans and that the stories that are told to me are a modified script that professional African Americans tell to white people. This could possibly explain the differences between the testimony Lareau and I heard and the testimony heard by Bonilla-Silva.

One working class African-American participant who was forthright about her experiences with racism discussed in detail how racism had impacted her family and limited her schooling choices. Ruby, a single mother of five, moved to the area in the far South End that Felicia had discussed as somewhere she would not feel comfortable. Ruby was excited to find a home she could afford with a yard where her children could play. She described her experience living in a house in the neighborhood adjacent to Medora Elementary School near Valley Station:
So then I moved out Dixie Highway off of (street name)... but they (her children) didn't even make it to school there because I ended up moving out of there over the summer. I had moved there in April. I kept them in Crum’s Lane until the school year ended and then throughout the summer. I ended up having to move from that house in August because it was a racial neighborhood. They didn't want black people living in the neighborhood so we ended up having to move out.

well, actually it was the landlord who told us who that that it was best that we should leave...

(the landlord) told me it was best for me not to live there. He did not even tell me anything about the racism and the neighborhood at first when I was moving in there. He took my money, signed my lease and let me move. Then once we got in there they were talking about ‘shooting my windows out and we needed to go back to where we came from’ and calling my kids monkeys. You know I'm talking about it was just terrible. It was like the worst time.

I didn't even know people still did stuff like that and here I am in my own hometown and that is actually happening to me and my children. It was just like really shocking. It was just so shocking! My kids were afraid to go outside. Every time they would go to get in to the truck they would look around first and they would just make sure nobody was outside and they would just run and it was just like devastating but I had to stay there because I had already moved
everything and then I wasn’t even going to tell my landlord because I was just like okay, this is my house. But it was so bad. Eventually, it was other people in the neighborhood who ended up telling him and then that’s how he found out. So he told me he thought it would probably be safer for me to move because when the school year started I would have a middle school child and he would have had to walk to the bus stop and if he was to walk to the bus stop than the guys could have gotten him then, you know. It was horrible. – Ruby

Ruby’s experience living in the Medora neighborhood on the south end is a testament to the continued racial tensions that exist in this country. Ruby, like the participants in Bonilla-Silva’s (2010) study, was not hesitant about describing the racism she had experienced in her new home. She saw the very real effects this experience had on her children and she was able to articulate how that changed her set of school choices. Housing discrimination had profound impacts on her school choice set. Although Ruby felt that she was legally allowed to stay in her home, and for a time felt that she was entitled to live there, ultimately the fear for her children’s safety was paramount. She moved to a more racially diverse neighborhood in the Jacob reside, an area that was still on the south west side but not as far south as the Medora reside. When I asked how she decided that neighborhood was okay she said,

I did come and look at the neighborhood and everything just to make sure that I was not getting into another one of those predicaments. So, I just made my decision based upon that. – Ruby
When I asked Ruby how she would know if it were safe, she described looking for diversity, people of color, in the neighborhood. In her mind, if she saw other black people around then her children could live there, too. Ultimately, the quality of the school was secondary to whether or not her children were safe waiting for the bus. The schools located in the farther south end had higher test scores, and the homes were newer with better amenities but her children were afraid to go outside, so the amenities of the neighborhood meant little to her family. Bourdieu depictions of how social actors are prevented from challenging the social hierarchy is illustrated, not only through the types of physical threats that Ruby and her children had to endure but also through the resulting change it made in what she chose next.

Bourdieu holds that the ultimate spring of conduct is the thirst for dignity, which society alone can quench. For only by being granted a name, a place, a function within a group or institution can the individual hope to escape the contingency, finitude and ultimate absurdity of existence (Wacquant, 1998, p. 265).

Although Ruby understands that she has a right to live in the far South End, she is threatened there and realizes that her children are not safe to go to the better schools in that neighborhood. In her search for dignity, the ability to live her life without fear, she chooses a home that allows her to maintain her dignity even if it offers lower test scores and lower-performing schools. She does not view the school district as a place to find assistance with school choices. Her past experiences as not only a parent but also a student in the Jefferson County School district tell her that the school district is not a
reliable advocate for her. She did not feel validated there as a student or as a parent and does not seek advice within the school district.
Images from the South End
The changing demographics of the southwest side have meant that many immigrants have relocated to this part of town. The many Spanish-speaking residents are served by bilingual services at area churches.

Medora Elementary is in the far south west part of the county, along Dixie Highway in a secluded residential neighborhood. The park like setting of the school is open and can be reached by driving through a neighborhood of modest single family homes.
The South End had a mixed identity, with the far South End trying to maintain race privilege by keeping African American parents, like Ruby, out of the neighborhood. Barbara, Christie, Kagan and Rosie, who are all white, saw the South End as a place where residents did not have economic privilege and where the schools were of a lower quality as measured by test scores than the East End schools. Kagan and Rosie chose to escape this area of town, whereas Barbara and Christie spoke with great fondness about their communities at Smyrna and Medora and the comfort they found in those school communities. They described the test scores of their schools as good but not great and seem to be at peace with their choice; their school and community were places they “fit;” socially, racially, and economically.

Like Durkheim, Bourdieu sees these natural choices as more revealing about society than about the individual and that in examining society, we should “treat social facts as things to reveal the imprint of society in what appear to be free choices made by individuals” (Doyle, 2004, p.83). Although Christie and Barbara see their decision to live in the South End as a free choice, it actually reveals more about their race and class identity and their place in the social hierarchy. The fact that they accept this place and embrace it is indicative of "the imprint of society" – the material reality of their lives dictates the housing choices available to them; they do not have the means to purchase a half million dollar estate in the East End, and the choices available to them will likely ensure that their children will not have that option either. Their comfort with their choice indicates their place in the social hierarchy and "manufactures" their consent to offer that choice to their children as well.
The West End and Downtown – Shifting Sands

The West End of Louisville is usually described as being west of ninth street downtown and north of Algonquin Parkway. Prior to the 1960’s, the West End was integrated, with both blacks and whites living there (K’Meyer, 2009). In the 1950’s and 1960’s, white flight from the West End was facilitated by the development of housing for returning GI’s in the East End of Louisville, discriminatory lending practices of banks and block busting real estate practices. The percentage of white residents in the West End had greatly decreased by the mid 1970’s (K’Meyer, 2009, p. 143). Today the non-magnet public elementary schools located in the West End - King, Young, Maupin and Wheatley are less than 15% white, despite the enrollment targets of the JCPS district. To most people in Louisville, the West End is the “black part of town,” although African Americans live in almost all parts of Louisville and there are many other areas of town where African Americans have lived for generations. Participants often lumped the West End together with Downtown despite a difference in the mix of residential and businesses in the downtown area. Downtown includes a larger area, encompassing the business district and the riverfront. When talking about schools, most parents discussed them in similar terms, although when discussing other aspects of life, downtown and the West End were separate. White suburban parents spoke freely about visiting Downtown for shopping or work, but indicated that they had never been to the West End.
Ruby, whose experience was discussed in the previous section, also discussed her perceptions and experiences of the West End. When I asked her about the West End, she said that her neighbors in the South End assumed that she had lived or should live in the West End because she was black. When her Medora neighbors began harassing her and threatening her, they would tell her that she should go back to the West End. When I asked her how she felt about this she said she found it "humorous" because she had never lived in the West End.
Darla, a white professional who actively sought to enroll her child in a magnet school downtown, was very committed to social justice and equality of opportunity. She was engaged in trying to make Louisville a place that was more tolerant and racially heterogeneous. When I asked her about the situation in the West End, she talked about the efforts to change the reputation and reality of the West End, and the efforts the city and developers had made to improve it. She talked about the promotion of middle class neighborhoods areas and the success of bringing economic diversity to the West End but lamented the fact that it was still extremely difficult to bring about racial diversity.

They brought middle and high income housing with Park Duval\(^\text{22}\) but they have terrible diversity. I mean it’s great income wise, you know they have CEOs and bankers living next to people who are on Section 8 but they are all African-American so there are hardly any white people over there though. I think the West End is going to be harder to integrate then the East End…so many white people will not cross Ninth Street. - Darla

Darla was transparent in her conversations about race and geography in Louisville; however, most participants, white and black, used coded language to describe areas of town. Most participants would not directly talk about the West End, even when probed, nor would they explain the racial demographics of the area. Participants affected a color-blind mentality that distanced themselves from overt racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). When participants were asked if they had considered schools in the West End, the

\(^{22}\) Park Duvall was a planned development in the West End that included new single family homes, apartments that were market rate and subsidized and shops. The development has attracted many high income African American residents, but it has failed to attract white residents in large numbers.
majority simply frowned or grimaced uncomfortably and then shook their heads slightly to indicate a negative response. Some simply said, “We would not consider schools in that area of town.” When pressed, they would often say things like, “Well, you know what I mean.” Parents were uncomfortable talking about the racial composition of the neighborhoods of the West End and most would not say anything specific about it.

However, one participant who lived in the West End had a different story to tell about her neighborhood. Maya, an African American professional who lives in the West End and was seeking to enroll her child in a West End school, spoke about the strengths of West End neighborhoods. Maya was pleased with the large number of high performing schools in her West End neighborhood, as well as the peacefulness of the quiet street where she lived.

We are happy with our house. My husband’s grandfather lived next door to us until he passed away and our home is paid for. It is a quiet neighborhood and it is mostly seniors that live around us so it is nice and quiet. – Maya

Maya's comment that her neighborhood is "nice and quiet" was responding to something about the neighborhood that I had not specifically probed. I had not asked about the noise level on her street or the atmosphere on her street. When she was speaking about her home in the West End, she almost seemed to be speaking against the stereotypes about her neighborhood. Maya took pride in the fact that her house was located in close proximity to six high performing schools. Because the magnet
schools were strategically located in the West End to draw suburban whites, some of the "best" schools in Louisville are located in the West End. Maya said of her choices,

So, we just, I mean we are really, where we are located, we are within a two-mile radius of (she pauses and counts) six very high performing schools that are just right there, two of which we can walk to from my house... Carter Elementary School, which is where we vote, that's where we are. Kennedy Montessori which is in the back of that same neighborhood, Brandeis Elementary, 2 miles away maybe and then McFerrin Academy which is not too far about maybe 5 miles... Then we have Johnson Traditional School and Foster Traditional School. 

Maya

Maya felt that the great schools in her neighborhood meant that she could have the best of many worlds, schools that were close to home, schools that were diverse, and schools that were high performing as well. In this way, the historical impact of busing in Louisville has established some of the best elementary schools, middle schools and high school in the Downtown or West End yet these schools have not changed the reputation or increased the value of homes there. Despite its high quality schools, the West End remains, to many Louisvillians, a black ghetto. The chain link fence surrounding the Math and Science Magnet, Brandeis, is a testament to the crime and/or fear of crime in the surrounding neighborhood.
Images from the West End

Park Duvall Development

Carter Traditional Magnet School
Grand Opening of the First Choice Market: New Grocery Store in the West End
Boarded up Public School Building in the West End

Homes in the West End Neighborhood
The view from the rear of Brandeis Elementary School.

Brandeis, a highly competitive magnet school in the West End is enclosed with a locked chain link fence. The security guard reported that there were only two walkers attending the school.
Most white and black parents in the study actively resisted the West End as a location for their child’s school by refusing to place West End schools on their application, by choosing not to enroll in West End Schools when they were assigned, or by actively choosing to look at only private schools because of a fear of being assigned to a "low-performing school" in the West End. Still, there was a subset of parents, both white and black, who, like Maya, chose to invest in the schools in this area. Winona, who purposefully chose to enroll her daughter in the magnet school, Coleridge Taylor Montessori School in the west end of Downtown, felt that the diversity of the school was a bonus to her and her daughter. She did not live in the West End, but chose to enroll her daughter in school there because of the strength of the program and the diversity of the school. Unlike Brandeis, which takes all of its students by lottery, Coleridge Taylor is half reside parents, so at least half of the school lives in the majority black neighborhoods surrounding the school. Winona felt that the diversity this offered her child would be a benefit to her in the future. She glowingly described the Winter Concert at Coleridge Taylor as a place where parents from both the neighboring public housing and the parents of magnet students came together for a magical night.

They had a holiday music program that was just like absolutely fantastic. It was so good. I was just really excited about that because they sang show tunes; they didn’t sing any Christmas songs. All the kids sang show tunes and they had choreography and it just like it blew me away. It was so good but their music

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23 Resides parents are parents who live in the neighborhood area surrounding the school.
teacher is like phenomenal. She is like really amazing but so that was great and it was just like a packed auditorium and the parents at one point at the end they sang this wonderful old-time kind of gospel song and all the parents started singing and it was just really great. It was just really great. - Winona

Winona did not speak about the West End in the same manner as other participants, who sought to distance themselves from the West End. She had visited the schools in the West End and felt comfortable with Coleridge Taylor, and she actively sought a transfer in the middle of the school year to get a place there.

Winona was rare in her appraisal of Coleridge Taylor. Whereas, Winona saw great promise in her West End school, Laurel was disappointed to have her daughter assigned to Coleridge Taylor. She described her first experience visiting the school;

I called the school to make an appointment to go on a tour. We go down there and meet with the principal and she seems to have no clue who I am. And she is, you know, we go on the tour – obviously it is a huge school – we see the school – we go through the classrooms and talk to some people. She answers a few of my questions. We are getting ready to leave and she treats me like I am some suburban mom that is afraid of the inner city school and she says “people pay a lot of money to put their kids in private school and we are doing the same thing here.” And I said, “we will see” And she knows nothing about Montessori and I have talked with people at Louisville Montessori School and they know that she
does not know anything about Montessori – and every time you see her – she is like a deer caught in headlights. - Laurel

Coleridge Taylor was Laurel’s third choice school and she expressed resistance to her daughter’s attending the school but did not have the financial resources to pay for a private school. She indicated that the location of the schools would not have mattered to her if it had been the educational environment that she wanted. Her first choice school was Brandeis, which was in a very similar neighborhood in the heart of the West End. She toured that school and understood where it was located, but she still desperately wanted her daughter to attend Brandeis. She said of visiting Brandeis,

Brandeis was good – it is kind of – I don’t even know where – I don’t know how we got there but it is far – far – in a land far far away – it was not a nice neighborhood. It had boarded up buildings, people standing on corners and I did not care about that because my husband was so pumped about it and they had a security guard and I was surprised because I did not know you had security guards at elementary schools. And you had to get buzzed in. And there was a parent who gave us a tour and she was an attorney and I had a couple of questions about the process and she answered those and they are doing a lot of good stuff there. It was good – the school is nice – they are doing a lot of good stuff there. - Laurel

Laurel felt that the atmosphere at Brandeis was superior to Coleridge Taylor. But Laurel was not only picking up on a difference in the atmosphere of the schools; the
composition of the student body is different as well. Brandeis has a much higher percentage of middle class and upper middle class parents than Coleridge Taylor. It has been described as the public school of choice for wealthy blacks and professional white liberals. Laurel’s intuition about the school is reflected in the data. When she says she prefers Brandeis over Coleridge Taylor, she is choosing a high income school over a low income school. Her choice reifies her position in the social hierarchy - she is choosing a school that reflects her own education and social class position.

Other participants who were assigned to West End or Downtown non-magnet schools did not choose to visit the school to which they had been assigned. Jane chose to do a quick drive-through to check out the school, but she did not make an appointment or go into the school. Both Jane and Marcy, who ended up enrolling their children in private schools, did not attempt to find out any more information about their West End school placement beyond its location. In the interview, both Jane and Marcy expressed regret that the schools were so uneven and took pains in the interview to distance themselves from racism or racist ideas, despite the fact that they chose to pay for private school rather than send their child to a West End or Downtown school.

Some white participants, however, did share strong opinions about the West End and Downtown, stating that they did not want their children to attend school in that area of town.

I worked down there and I do work that talks to me about people getting killed and I know where people are getting shot and I know where there are bomb
scares and I know where there are bomb threats and I know that fifth-graders are beating each other up and I see a lot of bullying going on because we do this work I know all that stuff too and it just makes me a nervous wreck for her to be downtown. – Angie

Although Angie recognized that violence happens in every neighborhood, her work in the social service field exposed her to a lot of violence in the Downtown area. Ultimately, she would not consider any of the schools in the Downtown or West End area, even though many of the specialized programs and magnets would have been a good match for her daughter who, she reported, was an exceptional reader at age five.

When Ellen, a white professional, talked about the West End neighborhood where her child attended school, she referenced the negative reactions of family members to location.

    My husband was okay with Brandeis but now his mother is another story. She says all the time, “are you sure that is safe down there” and she went to the first grandparent night and she was just shocked. And, you know, she was not impressed with the neighborhood plus she lives over in Indiana and that whole "come across the bridge to the West End" kind of thing... although my husband had an uncle that lived in the West End during the '50's and '60's when... you know what I mean... - Ellen

Although Ellen refused to talk about the neighborhood in explicit racialized terms, she became exasperated at trying to explain it in a "color-blind" fashion and finished by
looking at me, nodding her head knowingly, and saying, "You know what I mean."
When I probed to have her explain it more, she moved on to another subject.

Other parents who talked about not wanting to enroll their kids in Downtown or
West End schools (Area A schools) talked about the reside schools in the West End as
those that are low-performing. They attributed their decision to the academic
performance of the schools, purposefully distancing themselves from racism or racist
attitudes, while not denigrating the individual residents of the West End or Downtown.
The only time most white parents would specifically talk about race was when they
were explaining that they were not racist. Barbara said of the possibility of enrolling in
an Area A school,

    I did not want him to end up in one of the Area A schools not because I don't like
    the neighborhood or I'm prejudiced against people there but just because they
    are low performing schools and they are across town so I am going to have to
    first of all have additional travel time and juggle that schedule and try to figure
    out what to do with transportation and he is not even going to be in my
    neighborhood and he is going to school I don't like. - Barbara

Although Barbara had taken great pains in our conversation to avoid mentioning race,
she was careful to describe herself as anti-racist and her decisions as motivated by
logistical concerns. Although her choices had racialized results in placing her child in a
school where he would be in a racial majority, she explained this move as not being
motivated by race. In her extensive calculations and rankings of schools based upon
many categories, she did not actively choose racial composition as a factor, allowing her to feel affirmed in her identity as anti-racist.

However, another white parent, Kagan, was willing to be more explicit in her resistance to her sons attending a downtown school. Although she refrained from saying she did not want her children to attend predominately black schools or schools with black people, she did use coded language that often refers to black people, calling students who attend particular schools, gang-bangers, a term which usually indicates that a person is black. Kagan freely admitted that she had relocated prior to the new assignment plan to avoid bad influences on her children, and said that she felt that her choice to relocate to the East End was being undermined by the school assignment plan.

People choose to live in certain areas because they want to live around people like them or people they want to be like, either way, and part of this busing system undermines all of that... if I wanted my kids to hang out with gang bangers I would have moved to an area that was predominately gang banger but because of the busing system they are going to be on the bus with kids that you know are just one felony away from prison. If I wanted them around those people I would bring them to work... so I don't want them on the bus... (pause) I wish they would go back to neighborhood schools. I have no problem with neighborhood schools at all. .. but again for me what is so frustrating is that I have no control over this ...damn it I bought a house in a nice area because that's.. (trails off) ... if I wanted my kids to go to a worst case school in the West
End I would have paid $30,000 for a freaking house and lived in the West End....
so that for me that is what is so frustrating - I am kind of a control freak and I
have no control and that is not okay!.” – Kagan

Although Kagan never specifically uses the word, black or African American to talk about
the people in the West End, her coded use of gang-banger indicates her concern about
the class and racial composition of the neighborhood she is discussing.

African American participants who lived in the East End, Fern Creek and the Southwest
also distanced themselves from the West End, stating that it was not a place they
wanted to live. Most did not specifically say they would be uncomfortable there or that
it was a dangerous place to live. They talked mainly about growing up in other parts of
town and not feeling drawn to living in the West End. Felicia, who lives in Fern Creek
and works in the East End said,

I probably would not move to the West End. I have always lived out in this area
so I would not say because I am uncomfortable. I mean my grandmother does
live in the West End and I do go to see her but I probably just would not move to
that area. - Felicia

Despite the fact that the West End was once an integrated neighborhood, it has become
primarily African American. The median household income in the West End ranges from
$17,415 to $22,847. There has been recent development in the area with the building
of Park DuValle and most recently with the construction of a large local grocery store,
First Choice Market in June of 2012. Prior to this grocery opening, there was no large
grocery where residents could buy fresh produce in the West End. Yet the West End, in the eyes of most of the participants in the study, is a place to avoid. Even with the presence of six high-performing schools, the West End has not become a desirable place to live for white residents or many middle class black residents. Despite public policy that has created the highest quality schools in the area and brought middle class housing there, white Louisvillians have resisted efforts to convert this once racially and economically diverse neighborhood back into a popular place to live for many different groups.

The Highlands - Urban Renaissance and White Guilt

Participants who lived in the Highlands (an inner ring suburb) described wanting to make their neighborhood (resides) school better through enrolling and participating in the life of the school. The Highlands was described as a desirable place to live because of its vast number of restaurants and proximity to entertainment for children: the zoo, Cherokee Park, and the museums downtown as well as the walkable nature of the neighborhoods. Participants chose to stay in the Highlands, even when they were not pleased with the quality of the schools, because of the strength of the neighborhoods. The Highlands is also known as the most culturally diverse of neighborhoods in Louisville. As Audre described, “Where else can you find a person being led around on a dog collar and families taking their children for ice cream?” The Highlands is home to numerous coffee houses, independent bookstores, head shops, and independent music stores. The stores and houses center around Bardstown Road, stretching from Broadway downtown east to Taylorsville Road. Housing ranges from very expensive
estates to shotgun houses with shared sidewalks, to apartment complexes and high rise condominiums. It is the home of the movement for supporting local businesses called “Keep Louisville Weird.”

The western section of the Highlands is districted to Bloom Elementary, a school that is largely sought after. Jane, a participant who moved from Denver, Colorado, to Louisville, chose her house specifically so that her children could attend Bloom Elementary, and live close to the cultural offerings of the city. Jane did not want to be in the car all the time. Other participants described Bloom Elementary as the “it” school for white progressives in Louisville. Darla said of Bloom,

It is somewhat of a prestige thing. I think really Bloom is filled with people that if they made just a little bit more money they would be at Collegiate. You know
they really would not be in public school. I know enough of them to know that this is somewhat true. They want to be public school advocates now that they know they have their spot in Bloom. - Darla

Darla indicates the extent to which the Highlands is diverse because it works for upper class white people. Because they are in the majority in the Highlands, they are able to tolerate a certain amount of racial and class diversity in their schools. In fact, they take pride in being part of a group of people who support the public schools; however, she recognizes that part of the satisfaction that comes from supporting Bloom comes from the fact that their children were not assigned to a school in the West End, where the majority of students are students of color and on free and reduced lunch. The many artists, musicians, writers and academics in the Highlands, means that many families have high education levels and lower economic resources. This impacts the ability of these parents to afford private education.
The eastern part of the Highlands neighborhood, just one street away, is served by Hawthorne Elementary, a school which does not have as strong a reputation as Bloom and has a higher percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. My informants reported that Hawthorne parents in the Highlands try to get their children into Bloom, as did four parents in my study. Participants also described a large number of white parents enrolling in private school to avoid Hawthorne. According to JCPS, the Hawthorne reside has one of the lowest market shares for public school enrollment, with 52.2% of children in grades 1-5 enrolled in private school. Despite the number of people who choose not to enroll in Hawthorne, including two in this study, some felt drawn to support their local school. For Creighton, the poor reputation of Hawthorne was a reason to invest her time and children in the school. She says of her decision to send her child to Hawthorne,

Our decision was strictly the program that was available in our neighborhood and the location. We went with geography first, and I was just like let’s try this first, we can always afford private school if we choose to go that route. - Creighton

Creighton felt strongly that geographic proximity was a reason to invest in her neighborhood school, even though there had been mixed reviews about the quality, because she was committed to living a low-impact life style. In fact, Creighton visited multiple private schools but ultimately decided that they were either uncomfortable or “outside of her geographic bubble.” Proximity was a reason for her to invest in
Hawthorne. Her enthusiasm for joining the school community included joining a statewide group of parents who were trained in how to improve their public schools. Feeling attached to her neighborhood and her community made her more interested in the public school because she felt ownership of it.

Sage refused to deal with the unknowns of the JCPS system and throughout the two interviews I did with her constantly went back to a desire for her children to attend a peaceful school that was orderly and focused on learning. When she talked about her school choice process, she described her research into the Jefferson County Schools. She said of her experience,

Hawthorne was my resides school and it was not performing well for the years prior to our enrollment. They have a Spanish immersion program which they were well known for but other than that, I just knew I was not doing that. Bloom was doing pretty well and it was in my cluster but I was told that there was no way being in our zip code and white that we would get into Bloom if it was not our resides school.

Researcher: Was this an official person who told you that you would not get in?

Sage: well, it was not official. That is what people in our neighborhood said, that if you are white and you don't live in the reside then you are not going to get in ... and I was like "damn" because I would have considered Bloom if I thought we could have gotten into Bloom. - Sage
Sage was committed to the Highlands and spoke at length about only feeling comfortable in the Highlands, but she was not interested in enrolling her child in a school that was not performing well academically. She spoke about her own fond experiences in a private secular school in Louisville and the depth of learning in this private setting. When she spoke about her own children, her main concern was having both of her children together in a high performing, orderly school. She put a deposit down on the expensive private secular school in the Highlands, but when a spot opened up at the catholic school in the Highlands she took it to save money. She knew that paying for the secular school for both her children would take her entire salary and that by choosing a the Catholic school she could save some money and have her children in an "academic" environment in her neighborhood.

**East-Enders: The Suburban Oasis**

The East End was widely described as a highly desirable area to live in by participants. Even those participants who decided they would not feel comfortable living there recognized the high quality of the schools in this area of town. When people say East End, they usually mean the area of town in the Brownsboro Road and Shelbyville Road corridors, roughly east of Zorn Avenue and Cannons Lane and north of Interstate 64. The elementary schools most often described as being in the East End are Stopher, Bowen, Dunn, Hite, Middletown and Norton, although there are other elementary schools in this area. Jeffersontown is sometimes included in the East End as well, although it lies south of Interstate 64 and has a lower median income than the areas
further to the north. The East End falls in cluster five and cluster six and these were the clusters most often described as places to which people were purposefully moving for the schools. The East End also adjoins Oldham County, which is an area to which parents often move to avoid the Jefferson County School system. Many of the larger developments of high end homes are located in this area of town. Household incomes in the East End are much higher than in the rest of the county; zip codes in the East End have a median household income range from the mid $60’s to as high as $111,970 in Glenview (Elementary School Data Book).

Susan, who grew up in Ohio, relocated to Louisville to be closer to her husband’s family. She moved to the East End primarily because of the schools and the close proximity to her in-laws. Her first home was in an inner ring suburb off of Breckenridge
Lane, and initially she did not feel comfortable in that neighborhood. When I asked her what she saw in that neighborhood and its school that she didn’t like, she said,

I think it (the school) was Watterson ... we knew we did not feel comfortable with Watterson. The test scores, I mean I know they're not everything but I think that it is indicative of what's going on in the schools but the test scores were really really low and we kind of felt like we were not able to... and we were becoming less comfortable with our surroundings (in our neighborhood) like this is not... we're thinking, this is not where we want to raise children anyway.

Researcher: what were you seeing?

Susan: The homes were starting to be less well cared for. (pauses)

Researcher: Can you give me an example?

Susan: you (pauses) it was like, the yards, are not being well taken care of and you just saw... (trails off) It just didn't seem like that the people in those communities were really caring about their community, you know what I mean. We were living near that area off of Breckenridge Lane where there was a lot of commercial property like the Taco Bell and Kroger\(^{24}\) and all those kind of areas and there were just people hanging out at those establishments...Even just going to Kroger at night, it just it just felt like, it just didn't feel like home to us, just the people hanging out in front of Kroger.

\(^{24}\) Kroger is a grocery store.
Researcher: Can you describe what the people looked like that were hanging out in front of Kroger?

Susan: I don't really have a descriptor

Researcher: What about their age?

Susan: They were like teenagers or early 20s. I mean, frankly, I just don't know why you would hang out in front of a Kroger. If these young kids are hanging out at Kroger then where are the parents?

Researcher: And were they white, black, Hispanic or a mixture?

Susan: Probably a mixture...I just thought that there was less and less care for where people lived and I think that is indicative of other things. I think that when you take care of your house and when you see people out and they are communicating with their neighbors then there's a sense of community and you know, that is a place I want to be. I just saw some real deterioration of our neighborhood and the other thing is, quite frankly, we were living in what some people would call a patio home and so we also probably a majority of those folks were retirees because of the nature of the home or starting out folks without children so we also felt like once we had children we would probably be less likely to identify with where we were living at the time... I mean, we just thought, on a Saturday where would our community be? Where would our kids play?

- Susan
From the interview data, the progression of subjects from the test scores to the surrounding neighborhood to the homes to the people demonstrate how participants tried to distance themselves from talking about race as a reason to not choose a home or school. Susan builds her narrative around test scores; this is the story that she tells repeatedly: how she moved because the test scores in that area were poor. It is only as she keeps talking and I keep probing that she is willing to then describe a racialized environment that she notices but is reticent to describe. She refuses to name a particular race for the young people she sees and only responds, "a mixture."

Susan was looking for a certain kind of neighborhood that would give her community; her definition of community contains specific class markers. To her, a community is one in which teenagers have activities other than hanging out. In her idea of community, neighbors are similar to each other and thus talk to each other. Young people, who have a certain look, hanging around a store, marked this neighborhood as undesirable, not the type of people she would choose for community. When Susan and her husband began looking for a new neighborhood, they ultimately decided to go further east and buy a home in the Norton elementary school reside. When I asked about how she went about choosing her new neighborhood she said,

We looked at the test scores of the school. But we also looked at how active the PTA was. Norton had received awards for how involved parents were. Because my husband and I believed that parent involvement is one of the biggest indicators for student success and so then we got personal recommendations,
then we went further with the test scores. Then we felt comfortable with that area. We still had not decided what we're doing but at least we had a position for ourselves and we felt comfortable about that area and the public schools there...-Susan

The neighborhood change seen by Susan in going from the Watterson Elementary to the Norton Elementary reside is reflected in the socioeconomic position of the two schools. Watterson Elementary has a free and reduced lunch participation rate of 69.3%, whereas Norton Elementary is 24.4%. Susan does not ever indicate that the social class or race of the two neighborhoods is different. She frames her move as a way of finding community but does not attribute race or class to this community, confirming the theory that explicitly mentioning race is undesirable or impolite, although the movement she makes has very particular race and class implications.

However, not all people felt comfortable in the East End. Although the East End has high performing schools, the communities there do not always reflect the parents' culture. Some parents viewed the East End as exclusionary, and other parents in the Highlands, like Sage and Laurel, members what has been deemed by some, "the creative class," 25 do not see their values reflected in the East End. Laurel, who learned about Louisville neighborhoods from an episode of House Hunters prior to relocating to

25 Creative class is a term discussed by Richard Florida in his 2004 book, The Rise of the Creative Class, and indicates a class of people who are part of the information and artistic economy, who produce ideas or intellectual or artistic work. Occupations in the creative class include scientists, university professors and other professions which have room for creativity and personal expression and rely on the production of ideas or information.
Louisville from Arizona, was ultimately disappointed with her East End neighborhood.

She said of her search for neighborhoods:

Our realtor did not get us... Like we are the only people (in our neighborhood) who have a compost bin and when I talked about getting chickens they thought I was crazy. There is this nice couple that lives across the street and he is active duty military and they are nice people and they have been good friends to us and it took her two years to get pregnant and she finally gets pregnant and her husband is deployed and so I go to this shower and all of these women and their Coach bags and their painted on jeans (are there). And she was talking about breastfeeding and she said “I am going to try it but I am only going to do it for two weeks.” Breastfeeding is not something I can keep quiet about – and then she said, ‘my doctor said two weeks is as good as six weeks’ and then this other mother said ‘well I tried but then my mother said you don’t have to do this and then I just started the formula’ – and then they are all talking about this and the only person who really wants her to breastfeed is her mother-in-law.

And I say I may have a different life philosophy than all of you but my daughter was breastfed until 2.5 years and I worked full time the whole time and then finally the mother in law was relieved.

I am sure that the minute I walked out the door that those ladies were talking about me but I just I couldn’t keep quiet

I told her that I would help her.
It was really important to me and I knew that I was not going to have any more children. I told her that breastfed babies do not get sick the way that formula fed babies get sick.

I mean these women are just not like me. – Laurel

Laurel did not feel comfortable in the East End. She felt like the values of the mothers did not match her own and that she could not find community in this area of town. Her testimony about the baby shower and her realtor "not getting her" is a testament to the complexities of identity. Laurel's struggles with definitions of gendered expectations of mothers and the gendered, raced, and classed assumptions related to breast-feeding speak the identity negotiations encountered by parents attempting to find community with their children.

Sage felt similarly to Laurel and resisted her husband's suggestions to move back to the neighborhoods where she grew up, in the East End. She described her childhood neighborhood as a place where people drove into their garages and did not leave again until they backed their cars out of the garage again the next morning. As a young adult she had moved to the Highlands to escape that sterilized life and could not imagine going back and raising children in the east end.

Sage talks about her husband's push to move them out to the more homogeneous outer ring suburb for the schools,
We went through that when she was two or three and we were looking forward. We looked at Norton Commons before it was built. We looked at a couple of those communities out there, Hillcrest and every time we drove out there I got sick to my stomach and I couldn't, like I just knew, I could not live there. Then my husband had a distant relative who moved to Louisville and moved to one of those communities and it was recommended that I call her. She has children and my husband said, "talk to her about it" and then I called her. I didn't know her. I just called her as like a family connection. And we started talking and then she goes, "you work, well, none of the moms work." It was in Hillcrest. And I was like, I can't...I just didn't think I would fit in. She was not trying to be mean but she was just matter of fact...that's when we realized that. I told my husband, "you can move but I'm staying right here." He still thinks about it sometimes but I knew that it was not an option for me. I have to be in a place where I feel really comfortable in my environment. It is just very important that I feel comfortable, you know where I live. - Sage

The East End was universally described by participants as a particular kind of place, and some participants did not want to live there precisely because of its culture and the lessons that culture would teach their children. Even though the test scores are high in the East End schools, that in itself was not a compelling enough reason for all parents to send their children to East End schools. White parents like Laurel, Sage, Winona and Laurel resisted the homogeneity in race, class and values in the far East End and sought more diverse and dynamic environments for themselves and their children. They were
also interested in greater flexibility in gender roles. Their resistance to the cookie-cutter white suburb could be seen as an opening for policy makers trying to fashion diverse schools. All of the women expressed the value of racial, religious and economic diversity, but also the value of local sustainable schools, high academic expectations and outcomes, and deep family involvement in their school community. The school assignment process, as designed, did offer them diverse schools, but at the cost of moving them outside of their neighborhood community to schools that had lower academic outcomes than they desired.

Summary

Neighborhood identity was important to many participants in the study. Parents described choosing their neighborhoods because they represented their values or their way of life. They talked about finding people that were like them in specific ways, taking care to mention race or class as rarely as possible, and usually only when I specifically probed them with questions about race or class. They spoke as if neighborhood community was something that they could easily recognize, yet would not affirm that these neighborhoods had a racial or class hierarchy. They defined their interests and how they make choices around those interests.

Because classes are defined as individuals sharing the same dispositions as well as the same external conditions of existence, class becomes the principle of intelligibility of all conduct, and sociology can take as its aim to “determine how
class condition is able to structure the whole experience of social subjects”

(Brubaker, 1985, p. 762).

The social subjects in this study defined where they felt comfortable by describing people who shared their same social class or race without naming class or race. They coded their language about who "their people" were by describing neighborhoods or people by their test scores, hobbies, and tastes. When white parents became exasperated with defining the world in a "color-blind" manner, they would quip, "you know what I mean." Parents were able to hold on to their "color-blind" language until an event out of their control challenged their right to a certain place. Parents like Marcy and Jane, who purported to choose their homes based upon neighborhood amenities were confronted with the racial and class implications of their choice when the school district chose to place them in a school outside of that choice. The disconnect between their "color-blind" housing choice glowed Technicolor when the reality of a predominantly black school in a black neighborhood was their school assignment.

Ruby, the African-American participant who readily talked about the impacts of race, learned that the "color-blind" ideology works only until a person of color acts as if this is a reality. Her supposition that racism was a thing of the past slammed against the reality of a neighborhood that was intolerant of African-Americans. The desire to prioritize the quality of her housing and her child's schooling over choosing a racially heterogeneous neighborhood was thwarted by active white resistance to her presence, and thereby the racial and class hierarchy remained in place.
Parents did not actively talk about giving their children advantages in choosing particular neighborhoods; they were more eager to talk about preventing the disadvantage to their children of living in certain areas. The participants from each neighborhood were remarkably similar in taste and financial restraints. When parents were in neighborhoods that did not reflect their values and dispositions, they felt disconnected and uncomfortable in their environment. Participants like Kagan and Laurel, who had relocated to Louisville, felt they had made a mistake in choosing neighborhoods and sought communities that would match both their material wealth and their tastes. They looked at neighborhood as an expression of their tastes. Neighborhood identity also shaped preferences in schools. Participants often hoped to find a community with like-minded neighbors in their local school. Parents who did not get into their neighborhood schools often chose private schools instead. Perception of neighborhoods varied depending on race, socioeconomic status, and values. Whereas some parents moved out of the South End to avoid the schools, others felt more comfortable in the South End. White and upper class black parents talked about choosing the East End because of the high quality of schools while lower class whites and more liberal whites talked about not feeling comfortable in the East End. All participants talked about the high quality of the East End schools. With the exception of Ruby, the participants avoided talking about race or class in explicit terms and would not commit to the idea that they did not like a neighborhood because of the race of the people there. However, codes that signified race and class were employed by all participants to talk about neighborhoods.
Chapter Six: MARKETS FOR SCHOOLS

‘I guess we are just going to have to work this system.’

Economist Milton Friedman believed that encouraging schools to compete for parents would maximize the efficiency and quality of schooling in America, and he encouraged a system by which public school dollars would go to parents in the form of vouchers, rather than to public school officials (Friedman, 1982). Friedman’s belief in a free market for schools grows from the idea that parents are educated consumers who will use profit-maximizing behavior in their school choices. According to economists, this means that parents evaluate their schooling options and choose schools based upon rational reasons related to quality and efficiency. Theories of competition and individual choice in the school marketplace are part of a larger neoliberal movement that theorized a type of hyper-laissez-faire capitalism that placed the onus on the consumer to make choices in the economic marketplace and simultaneously moved away from collective or governmental responsibility for managing society and its people. This neoliberal framework was theorized by Friedman and the economists at the Chicago school and applied globally through the policy interventions of the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. As these international agencies forced neoliberal reform on the developing world, efforts increased to privatize industries in the United States, as well. Deregulation of the airline industry and energy industries undertaken in the 1980's and 1990's were part of this larger focus on creating a neoliberal discourse that framed government or collective enterprises as inefficient and unnecessary
impediments to freedom and efficiency. In recent years, the neoliberal movement has borrowed rhetoric from the Women's movement and the Civil Rights movement to frame deregulation as part of "choice" and "equal opportunity." The public school system in America became a site for this discourse to take hold, as the rhetoric of "choice" could be used to siphon off public school dollars from the behemoth that public school districts had become. Using choice as a solution for the problems of the US school system has its detractors; researchers question whether we really know enough about how parents choose schools and how these choices impact the education of the children (Ravitch, 2010). Research that has been done on school choice offers scant evidence that choosing schools fits the rational decision-making described by economic theorists. For example, studies suggest that parents will articulate one reason for applying to schools while researching other reasons; Schneider and Buckley (2002) demonstrated that parents were very interested in the racial demographics of schools in their internet searches but did not actively articulate this factor as their priority in interviews with researchers.

The data in the Louisville case reveal that when parents were asked to discuss their school choice process, they prioritized logistics and cohesiveness of daily life. They framed their decisions as a process of balancing work and school responsibilities, as well as equity among siblings. When they were asked about their neighborhoods and where they chose to live, they talked about their sense of identity and their connection to a place where they felt comfortable, yet white parents in particular did not discuss these decisions as motivated by the race or class of particular neighborhoods. After
family needs were considered and neighborhoods were chosen, families still faced the choices offered by the school assignment plan as well as private and homeschooling options. Because more than one schooling option fit these criteria, families ultimately chose among a set of schools. Parents articulated that schools were important in the future of their children and that the decision was part of a larger picture of who they wanted their child to be. They understood the school as a place where their child would gain access to a set of privileges granting access to power in life. Parents understood, as Bourdieu theorizes, that schools confer power:

No one can deny that the school plays a crucial role in the distribution of knowledge and know-how, although a less important one than is ordinarily thought, but it is equally clear that it also contributes, and increasingly so, to the distribution of power and privilege and to the legitimation of this distribution. (Bourdieu, 1989a, p. 116).

Bourdieu understands the school as a site where parents can vie for power or where privilege is conferred. In the game of school choice, how do parents understand the power that certain schools confer and how do they gain access to that information? For Louisville, in particular, how do parents come to understand which schools bring connections to power and privilege? As chapters Four and Five have demonstrated, much of the school decision-making is heavily constricted prior to consciously choosing a school. When parents make decisions about housing and work and determine a set of schools related to geography, they predetermine a set of schools which are possible for a particular location. Ultimately, even the most constricted parents usually have more
than one school that fits the requirements of logistics and neighborhood, and because of the assignment plan, their preconceived choice was not always achieved. So, when more than one school fit a parent’s requirements or when they were confronted with an assignment from the school district that did not match their set of choices, how did they ultimately choose a school in which to enroll their child? How parents discovered, researched, and ultimately chose a school among those which satisfied the family requirements and neighborhood predilections were often more revealing about the parents' racial and class identities than any other aspect of the choice. As parents talk about schools and hear about schools, a type of coded and even more explicit language about race and class enters the discussion. Parents begin to look in more concrete ways for a school choice that is "comfortable," or one that mirrors their own race and/or class background. This aspect of school choice, in matching race and class, unravels the neoliberal argument that purports that school choice is a liberating economic decision that is profit-maximizing. As parents reveal in the study, they do not choose the one school with the highest test scores and most qualified teachers; in fact their choices are much more complicated reproductions of their race and class background, and the confining nature of these choices is magnified by the movements of other parents to ensure that all parents are choosing schools that maintain racial and class segregation, despite the intent of the school assignment plan. The complexity of the plan and the sheer volume of choices left many opportunities for parents of privilege to use informal

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26 Parents are asked to put down their top four choices of schools, two from Area A and two from Area B. Ultimately they are assigned one of those choices, and there is no guarantee that they will get their first choice.
networks to gain access to high quality schools for other parents of privilege. This word of mouth transmission of information led parents with social capital to have a more in-depth understanding of the student assignment process and the variety of school choices. Yet official means of marketing schools to parents and students were crucial as well. Parents spoke at length about their experiences at the Showcase of Schools, an annual school marketing fair, and of the tours and open houses held at the schools. They discussed the influence of facilities, curriculum, and treatment by school staff on their perceptions. Almost every parent discussed test scores as a measure of a school’s value, although how parents interpreted these scores varied.

**Word of Mouth**

Although data about schools are widely available on the internet and from school districts, the data were not the first source that most parents consulted to discover the attributes of schools. My research suggests that parents first relied on the opinions of neighbors, family and friends to determine a set of schools; when I asked where a parent learned about a particular school, the most common response was word-of-mouth. Parents talked about networks of family, church, neighbors, parent groups, and pre-school groups which advised and suggested or told praising or disparaging stories about schools. Parents learned about schools from bunko groups and parents of friends. Pre-schools organized groups to discuss where their children would go next. Oftentimes a key figure would emerge as a person who had researched schools extensively and was very knowledgeable about them. This community expert was often
an advisor to multiple parents about where to visit or how to fill out applications. Some informal advisors helped parents preserve their privilege, while others like Darla worked towards easing anxiety in white parents about diverse schools.

Darla, a white professional who was dedicated to social justice, served as a community expert for many parents in her group of friends, helping them fill out their applications and talking about the opportunities available in the public school district. She described in her interview how a friend’s husband called her and asked if she could convince his wife to enroll in the public schools, because he did not think they could afford the private schools. Darla talked about how parents would call her to ask for her help with the process, and she even worked at convincing her friends that they should attend the Montessori Magnet, Coleridge Taylor, in the West End.

So I am talking to them, you know, I said, ‘you guys, well, you all got into Coleridge Taylor, so if we got into Coleridge Taylor, let’s just all go to Coleridge Taylor; let’s just forget Bloom, just all go to Coleridge Taylor. So it is not a fancy school, it is true, but it’s just perfectly fine. But they had their hearts set on Bloom. –Darla

Although Darla was not successful in convincing all parents, she was an important person in bringing white middle class parents together to support and invest in the public schools. Her efforts to bring a group of middle class parents together at Coleridge Taylor spoke to her value of diversity but also reflected her material reality. She could not afford private schools and stated that she did not feel comfortable in a
private school environment. She thought it was unlikely that all of her friend’s children would get accepted at Bloom, and so she devised this plan for them all to go to Coleridge Taylor. Ultimately, her son was offered a place at Bloom and Coleridge Taylor; she chose to enroll him at Coleridge Taylor. Darla resisted her racial and class privilege in not accepting a place at Bloom, which is 76.6% white and 29.8% free and reduced lunch, and instead chose to enroll at the more diverse magnet school, Coleridge Taylor, which is 33.3% white and 59.4% free and reduced lunch.

Many parents chose a crowd-sourcing model for school selection: asking as many people as they could about their experiences. However, the wide variety of opinions created anxiety. When Angie, a white professional, started asking around, the differing opinions convinced her that this was a decision that was best delayed.

So I started asking around about (an elementary school in the east end) and there are really a lot of mixed reviews on the school. Some people really really like it. Other people had horrible experiences there. I have a friend who taught there and he hated every minute of teaching there. And I have another friend whose mother-in-law works there and loves it and so I really just I think I have just shut down about it. At one point I had just decided I am not going to worry about this until it really comes time to worry about it. –Angie

Angie did not talk about researching the school or visiting the school; she did not use official sources of information. She instead chose to get opinions from people she knows, a research strategy that is less about the verifiable or measurable qualities of the
school and more about impressions and feelings of people who are like her. Shared social opinions of schools prevented Angie and others from investing in the research process.

When Felicia, an African American professional, was placed in her third choice school, she used the information she had from neighbors and friends to determine that the school was not worth visiting. She did not check the test scores, meet with the principal, or visit the schools. She allowed her sources, the people around her, to tell her about the quality of the schools.

Of course you know word-of-mouth, oh you hear things, like that school is not that great without having to go and look at it yourself... I mean that's just what we heard; it was not that great of a school. – Felicia

Felicia did not visit her assigned school after hearing about it from her social network. She had been denied a spot in the traditional magnet school that she wanted and therefore placed her daughter in a Catholic school outside the district. Parents would also use this word-of-mouth information to determine not only the quality of a school, but also the type of community represented at the school. Susan talked about relying on word-of-mouth because it let her know where she might find community.

I did a lot of anecdotal talking to people, talking to my sister's mother-in-law having lived here for years, talking to her friends. She had friends that had kids of my husband's age that had gone to that school system and that area of town so she was able to give me feedback and she told me that it was a good school
and she said, you know, this person is a product of that school and just being able to feel like I had this anecdotal information and that I could identify with these folks. - Susan

Susan, who was new to Louisville, used this word-of-mouth to find "like-minded" people; knowing who had graduated from the school made her feel comfortable with it as a choice. The graduates are also a known quantity for Susan, emblematic of the race and class of students who attend a particular school. Networks of new friends were crucial for transplants to Louisville who lacked familial support in the school selection process. Creighton gleaned her list of schools from talking to other parents.

I was active in a book club at that point and everyone had children around the same age and the ones who had kids a little bit older offered their insights and then just going down to the playground at the park and you know moms start asking. -Creighton

When parents talked about their word-of-mouth sources for information about schools, both white and African American parents referenced informants who shared their class background. White parents were more likely to find an informant who was also white. Word-of-mouth referrals became informal networks in which similarly classed people informed each other about places where “people like them” attended school.

In the magnet school application process, parents used word-of mouth to navigate a complicated system that has both applications and lottery selection processes to assign students to highly competitive specialty magnet schools. No
participant in the study mentioned that they first heard of one of the competitive magnets from reading the *Choices* booklet or other materials from the school; rather it was through talking to others that parents learned how to handle the complicated application process. Because students enrolled in MST magnets or traditional schools get preferred admission to the competitive high schools, Manuel and Male, understanding the magnet school process from the time your child is very young is key to accessing the most competitive high schools in Louisville. However, parents did not directly learn about the preferred admission from JCPS, but instead learned it from other parents. As Kagan said in her interview, "I know I am deciding on high school now, with the choice I am making for my four-year-olds, that is the way it works." The easy path to the competitive high schools started by gaining admission to the magnet elementary schools, which is something parents learned from other parents or on tours of the magnet schools, where tour guides mentioned this fact, as well. The parents who did not understand this part of the process were those who ruled out the magnets early on and did not visit them at all and who had not learned about this preference from other parents. Middle class parents preserved their privilege by sharing information about these application and school choice strategies. It was informal networks that allowed them access to the competitive magnet school track.

Bourdieu argued that education was one of a series of strategies used by families to perpetuate or advance their social position. Education as symbolic capital worked together with other capitals to advantage and disadvantage, and to position social agents in multiple fields (Thomson, 2008, p. 76).
In positioning themselves in the education field, parents used class contacts to obtain information about gaining access to prestigious high schools. People who considered competitive magnets such as the traditional schools, Brown and Brandeis, did so because of word-of-mouth recommendations and advice about the importance of gaining early access to these pipelines to the competitive high schools. These recommendations often resulted in subsequent research about test scores and visits, but always the first interest came from a personal recommendation.

Choosing Brandeis, I think it was mainly the buzz with other parents and then again looking online and trying to decipher but mainly it was just the reputation it had and the people that I spoke with...I learned a lot about the public schools from people I work with and I just guess parents of people that my kids went to school with, I think a lot of that was the application process particularly in terms of the public school. –Jane

For parents who did not have large networks of friends and family to rely on for information, the choice process of the public and the private school market, was almost impenetrable. Marcy, who had relocated to Louisville from the western United States, had many misunderstandings about the assignment plan, and her lack of anecdotal information from friends and neighbors resulted in “serious mis-steps,” as she referred to them, in the application process. When I asked her how she learned about schools and the choice process, she said,
The first thing we did at the time was read everything on the JCPS website. We had heard that their choice program had started but there was very little on the website, really hardly anything, and there was this thing that you could plug in your address and find out your neighborhood school, there was that. That was mostly it, and then we read the booklet about how you would be allowed to choose your schools, all right, so that was very interesting, trying to figure it all out and then we went to the big fair, the Showcase of Schools... You know, I was just trying to figure it out, like what did they mean by this phrasing (in the booklet). – Marcy

Marcy did not talk to any parents at her elementary school or church or work about the process. She did not mention anyone who gave her anecdotal information about the schools. When she finally became too frustrated with the booklet and its vague phrasing, she asked her husband to ask somebody about what it might mean. Her husband, who had grown up in Louisville, asked a family friend who worked for JCPS if they were guaranteed their reside school, and he said they were. Marcy and her husband did not confirm this detail with another source or have discussions with other parents about the reside school guarantee. This mis-information given informally by a JCPS employee meant that Marcy and her husband filled out their application in a way that would almost guarantee they would not get their first or second choice school. They put Stoffer as number one and Hite as number two and did not even put their reside school, Klondike, on the list because they assumed their son had a spot there if he did not get into a school he wanted. Because Stoffer and Hite, both 67% white, are
oversubscribed schools from their own reside area, it would be unlikely that a resident of another Area B reside would be admitted to the school; there are not enough spots for the people who live in the neighborhood to attend. Marcy’s lack of understanding about how the system worked and her reliance on the erroneous information provided by the school district meant that she was placed in her fourth choice, Wheatley, a low-performing school in the downtown that was less than 15% white. Wheatley was not a school that Marcy had visited, and she did not enroll her son there. Her husband had put it on the form when the secretary insisted that they put an Area A school in the blank for choice three and four. Marcy and her husband lacked vital information about not being guaranteed the reside school partly because they had not used an extensive network of friends and family as other parents had, but according to official means, they had done everything right; they had read the choices booklet, they had examined the details on the website, and they had attended the Showcase of Schools. Marcy had been an informed consumer from official sources, yet in her mind the assignment plan did not work for her and ultimately she chose to enroll her son in a private Catholic school because the district assigned him to Wheatley.

The Showcase of Schools

In October of 2010, I attended the Jefferson County School District Showcase of Schools in Louisville, took photos and talked to as many people as I could about their experiences with schools. The Showcase, a school fair at the downtown convention center, felt much like a boat show or car show, where all of the vendors are present and
potential customers, those wanting to learn more about a product they are going to buy, have the ability to walk around in one location and talk to multiple suppliers. At the 2010 Showcase of Schools, there were booths for elementary, middle and high school. Applications for the 2011 – 2012 school year were available, and there were additional booths for the after-school programs, special education services, and the Parent Teacher Association. Subsequent showcases were held in October of 2011, with all the schools in the district, and again in January of 2012, with just the elementary schools. For many parents, the Showcase of Schools is the introduction to the public schooling options in Louisville, and many parents attend the showcase two or three years prior to their children entering kindergarten. I asked each parent to talk about their knowledge of or experiences at the Showcase of Schools, using my own experiences at the Showcase to guide my questions and probes.

The Showcase worked differently for different parents depending on their access to transportation and information about the event. Ruby, a single mom of five on social services, had not attended the Showcase when any of her children were enrolling in school. When I asked her about it, she replied, "I've never heard of it." When I asked if she wanted to see information about the different schooling choices for her five kids, she said, “that choices thing never worked out for me, they always just told us which one we were going to.” As far as she could remember school officials had never told her about the Showcase of Schools, nor to her recollection had she ever received any information about it. Although the Showcase was set up to provide the consumer information that Friedman envisioned in his marketplace of schools, the dissemination
of that information is both raced and classed, in that some parents have access to it and others do not. The convention center is located on a bus line, but it is difficult to travel there for many people; some did not have access to a car and others felt intimidated by driving downtown or dealing with traffic and parking in the center of the city.

Mary found the location of the Showcase too overwhelming. She said of going, “We tried to go to the Showcase for Schools and after 45 minutes of driving around and trying to find some place to park I went home.” The downtown location of the Showcase frustrated Mary and ultimately she chose not to gather additional information about the public schools.

Parents like Felicia went to the Showcase to talk to one school in particular; it was a networking location to attempt to gain access to a competitive traditional school. Felicia’s husband was determined that their daughter would attend Greathouse Shyrock, so when they attended the Showcase they focused on talking to officials from Greathouse and the Traditional program. Because they were not looking to learn about all of the schools in general, but rather to make a connection to one school, they found the Showcase somewhat helpful in giving them access to school officials.

For the participants who went to learn about a great many schools and to learn about the process of applying to schools, most found the Showcase confusing and overwhelming. Susan felt the overall experience was confusing and unhelpful. She described getting a babysitter for her two children so she and her husband could attend, and then ultimately the disappointment they felt about the event.
Susan: Looking at it from the fact that both my husband and I are educated folks and we work in education – it was beyond overwhelming to me. I thought that it was extremely unwelcoming. So we walked in and my assumption was that someone would greet us – and none of that – we were never greeted or told how it worked.

And I see other parents feeling the same desperation as we are and thinking I don’t know where we are supposed to go – and we walked into that huge room and had no direction and there was no one there to help us. My husband and I did the best we could to look at the diagram, look at the pamphlet and figure out where the heck we were supposed to go. So we finally decided to go to Norton and then maybe we would know what to do and then hopefully we would be in that area. We found Norton Elementary School, we went there to their booth and we walked up to it. And my assumption was that they would come up to you. And they would say, ‘Hi – I am with Norton Elementary school – do you live in this neighborhood or have questions about Norton.’ None of that happened. My husband and I went and stood in the booth and then the three people in the booth sat there and chit chatted and did not acknowledge our presence. So, I finally looked at my husband and said ‘what should we do. I don’t even know what questions to ask.’ Then finally I interrupted their conversation and said ‘Is there any information that you can share about Norton Elementary School?’ And they handed us a pamphlet about the school and they said, ‘you know, do you live near the school’ and we said ‘yes – we are like four houses away behind the
school’ and they said ‘well – you need to come to our open house if you want in our school’ and I can’t remember the exact words but it was something to that effect, that ‘if you wanted into our school you need to make your name known.’

Researcher: With whom?

Susan: I said, ‘What do you mean?’ and they said ‘you need to come to the open house and you need to know people in the school system.’ And then one of the women looked at my husband and said you look familiar - and I am thinking thank god, hopefully it is a positive thing. – we are getting our names known and then she said (personal story about how she knew him). And then she said I do remember you. And she said – now you know somebody in the school. She said ‘I will remember your name.’ So I felt like I was in the mafia. And we talked a little bit and chatted. I said to my husband that this is the most bizarre thing. And I said this is the public school system, right – and he said ‘I guess we are just going to have to work this system.’

So we spent the rest of the night going table to table and asking them, you know, can you tell us about your school...well, I don’t know why the school system isn’t coached to work with parents who are new to school system. There was no engagement. Nobody would talk to us. - Susan

For Susan and her husband the Showcase of Schools was not a consumer driven event.

She was not being courted as a possible customer, even at her reside school. There was a system by which parents had to try to gain access to the schools and entice the booths
to speak to them about the schools; school staff and parent volunteers at the booths were not always solicitous of parents seeking information.

Susan was not the only one who felt more confused at the Showcase. That feeling was almost universal among parents trying to get general information about schools and the process. Kagan walked away from the Showcase more confused than ever:

I am relatively intelligent - I am relatively a go-getter but now that I have been to the Showcase I am so impressed that parents can even get their kids into school into JCPS. It is ridiculous - there really needs to be a JCPS for Dummies. So I would ask people (at the showcase), well, how do I get into the system. And they would say, ‘when it is about time, you go to your home school’ okay. Stop, so how do I know when it is about time, like when is about time - about time to me, is obviously three years in advance but what if I were not a go getter...So I talked to several schools. I pulled stuff from each of the schools in my cluster, once I figured out where that was. -Kagan

Kagan also felt that the Showcase was not accessible to her; barriers to gaining information about the schools were placed in front of parents at the very place they should have been gaining more information and comfort with the schools. The faculty, staff and parents at the Showcase did not have a market mentality, and were not inclined to offer more information than parents requested.
Marcy was also overwhelmed by her experience with the Showcase of Schools.

She describes her experience in 2008:

Then we went to the big fair, the Showcase of Schools and now this is the first year that they had it, this was 2008, yeah, and when we arrived they had booths all over. They had a brochure that I don’t have any more but the booths had people from all the schools and some had nobody there and some had very elaborate displays. Maybe one parent from the PTO had decorated the booths and some had a huge display and it was really hard to tell what was what. They were all different, everyone was plugging their programs and they all sounded great and totally uninformative. It’s kind of like when you go to the convention and you know they give you a grab bag and you fill it up with pencils but that does not mean you know what everybody is doing and it’s really hard to even know what questions to ask because they’re all talking about all of these different magnets and stuff and it’s like I want a solid basic good education for my son. Our philosophy all the way through has been I guess I should say our goal in his education choices for him is we want him to come out of this loving to learn ...You know we looked at lots of different things in addition to looking at the JCPS schools and you know we were researching about kindergarten in general, you know, how was it done in other cities because we didn’t know the questions to ask so we were trying to research using the Internet because we are both interested in what questions do you ask? What are good ways of doing things? So we were trying to bring all of that to bear but the Showcase of Schools
was really the launching part and it was a little overwhelming even when there weren't that many people there just because it was like, I guess, it was like going to a convention and it was trying to figure out, you know, how to judge which of the booths has the best product to sell you and you cannot do that at a convention. — Marcy

Marcy did not feel like she got solid information from the Showcase but she did notice something that many other parents noticed and that was that some booths had elaborate displays and were well-staffed with the principal and many staff people and other booths had no display and no attendant to answer questions. Christie also noticed the discrepancies among schools. She was working at her elementary school booth and visiting middle school booths for her older daughter. She talked about visiting the booth of her reside middle school:

She said we love the kids. And we are getting this…..and we are getting this and we are getting that – we are on the list to get this... and then right next door to them the violins are playing – and that was the brand new Western Middle School, that was the brand spanking new middle school. I don’t know if it was a new building or if it was just renamed. I am not real sure. I think that the magnet program was brand new. It was way too far away to drive there. And apparently somebody was willing to sink some money into that – into the bells and whistles – I don’t have a clue about the education...I just know that they
were handing out the pencils that were this long and the cups and they had the cheerleading team and the debate team. - Christie

Christie talked at length about the discrepancies between the school booths and her concern about the underlying reason for this. She was adamant that her daughter’s elementary school would have a welcoming and informative booth. She was surprised to discover that her principal did not have a plan for the booth at the Showcase of Schools. She wondered why some schools put effort into their booths and others did not. This was something that I noticed as well in my visit to the Showcase, but I did not put all of the pieces together until I came back and started looking at my photos in conjunction with my data on the schools; then I saw the pattern.

(Not) Advertising at the Showcase of Schools

Not advertising at the Showcase of Schools was part of a larger strategy of parents and faculty and staff to maintain certain types of populations at certain schools. What Christie and the other participants saw was part of a plan that preserved power by maintaining certain schools as locations of power and privilege through denying information or access to these schools of privilege:

Those who occupy the dominant positions in a field tend to pursue strategies of conservation (of the existing distribution of capital), while those relegated to subordinate locations are more liable to deploy strategies of subversion.

Established members have a vested interest in preserving the existing order and
criteria of judgment, new entrants an interest in challenging them (Wacquant, 1998, p. 269).

Sometimes what is not there is just as important as what is there. Privilege is conferred by not only granting access to some, but also through preventing access or knowledge to others. Both my participants and I noted that the Showcase of Schools had some booths that were conspicuously unstaffed and empty. This absence significantly contrasted with the elaborate displays put on by some schools, especially the magnet schools. Hawthorne was one school which had a well-staffed booth. Creighton, who worked the booth, said:

The principal came back from the showcase and said that how impressed they were that Hawthorne had parents there and the teacher and the principal at their booth for almost the whole showcase and a lot of booths did not do that. It was just the school staff. – Creighton

The active marketing done by Hawthorne relates to their relative position of power and privilege in the school system. Because Hawthorne is the weaker elementary school in the Highlands, the staff and parents worked hard to convince parents to enroll. Many parents in the Hawthorne district put Bloom as their first choice, thereby undermining the efforts of the school to gain middle class parents. Through marketing, the school hoped to gain students in their reside and to attract students to their Spanish-immersion magnet program.
The distinction between schools that were looking for students and those that were over-subscribed often fell along racial and socio-economic lines. When I returned from my research trip, I compared my photos of the booths with the school data. I found that the schools with high test scores in the eastern part of the school district, the high income and/or more white isolated neighborhoods in the East End and South End, were the most likely to have lackluster displays or no display at all, whereas the schools with the most elaborate displays and significant staffing were the low-performing or high minority schools. Christie learned about the strategy behind the Showcase when she approached her principal about her desire to create a great booth for the school.

I approached our principal about working that booth because I was at the showcase last year. I love (our school). I have a wonderful principal and she knows that she does not have to work to get people to come there – because we always has a waiting list because our test scores were really high, so she did not care if anybody was in that booth. I felt passionate that there had to be at least one person in that booth the entire time that the Showcase was going on because I felt like it set such an opinion with me when I was walking through there and the booth was empty. I mean, like right next door to us, was Wilder\(^{27}\) elementary and there was not a single person in that booth the whole time. I was there for all but two hours but there was never a single person. It was pretty but there was never a single person. – Christie

\(^{27}\)Wilder is 38.2% free and reduced lunch students compared to the district average of 62%.
Christie heard from her principal that they were not concerned about sending people to the booth or devoting resources to preparing materials because they were not worried about getting enough students for the school; they did not need to advertise. Although it is not one of the high achievers in the district overall, Smyrna has relatively high scores, and a high percentage of white students (67%), compared to other elementary schools in the district (JCPS, 2012). The principal did not feel the need to advertise.

Yet more explicit plans for not preparing a booth at the Showcase was mentioned in a few of my interviews with parents. These parents believed that the East End, predominately white or higher income schools did not advertise purposefully in order to preserve places in their schools for neighborhood children. When Winona told me about this, she expressed nervousness about sharing what she had heard about the reason.

A friend of mine was at the Showcase of the Schools and she was really shocked at how crummy the display was. She was just really put off by it and then my friend whose son goes there told her, she's like yeah. I was at the PTA meeting and they brought it up. They said, ‘so are we going do the same thing we did last year and have a really crappy booth because it seemed to work really well for us.’ And she was like, ‘what is going on’ and you know. And the woman said, ‘we want to save the room for our reside kids so we don’t encourage people to apply.’

Researcher: And was this a parent saying this or a district employee?
Participant: She was saying that both parents and district employees were saying this but I shouldn’t tell you that. –Winona

Saving room for reside students in the East End where Winona’s friend is on the PTA ostensibly means preserving places for white students or high income students, because those are the students who live in the reside area. Not encouraging other people to apply means that the school is not looking for applicants from the A area of town, applicants who are black or low-income. The lack of advertising, or saving room, is a maneuver that preserves places for white and/or middle income people. As the school assignment plan is in place to disrupt housing patterns that are racially and economically isolating, parents persist and find new avenues to maintain privilege and preserve places for white and/or middle class children in East End and South End schools. Two of the photos I took at the 2010 Showcase (at the end of this chapter) demonstrate the difference in presentation between different types of schools. Eisenhower, which is 71% white, is certainly not the only school that did not prepare materials or have staffing for its booth. Eisenhower’s display stood in stark contrast to the cheerful effort put into the Price Elementary School display, a school that is 21% white. Although I saw many booths that lacked effort and staffing, I primarily took pictures of the booths that had created something. It is difficult to remember to take pictures of things that are absent. It was not until I returned from my trip that I was able to piece together the significance of this absence: that it was the schools in white areas of town or high income areas of town that chose not to market themselves at the Showcase. Only when I started noticing the prevalence of black faces in the photos with magnificent displays
did I start to question the subtext to the marketing strategies. These subtle strategies are part of a system of social hierarchy that tends to maintain social divisions through manipulation of consumers.

Tours and Open Houses: Getting Access to Schools

The Showcase was not the only place where parents observed a discrepancy between schools that were actively trying to attract them and schools that were unconcerned with their application or actively discouraging them. In a market system, providers usually try to market their goods to consumers; they want to display their product, promote its worth and get as many people to buy it as possible. School tours and open houses can be viewed as an opportunity to persuade consumers that their school product is the one to choose. Yet how tours operated differed depending on the type of school. Parents talked at great length about visiting schools and attempting to visit schools at both open houses and through tours. Private schools were very accommodating with tours, and parents were welcomed to observe the schools in session and at open house events. Parents reported varied experiences with gaining access to the public schools, with public school officials preventing parents from visiting and oftentimes being openly hostile to parents who were trying to observe the environment where they might send their child. This hostility towards parental access to the education product runs counter to a market-mentality for school choice and echoes the work of Ndimande’s (2008) work on school choice in South Africa, which demonstrated that some consumers were welcomed in the marketplace, whereas
others were actively denied information and access to schools. Ndimande’s work, as mentioned in Chapter Two reflected that access to schools was raced, with black Africans receiving little, or purposeful mis-information. Participants in the Louisville case reported resistance to school access across race and class lines, often, interestingly, with middle class parents receiving adamant refusals to accommodate requests. However, middle class parents, both black and white, were more insistent about access and more willing to go elsewhere if access was denied. Although resistance to parent access was widespread among public schools and reported by almost every participant, not all public schools responded in the same dismissive manner to parents.

Being denied access to the school building was particularly stressful for parents, and for some parents the lack of access to the schools and the hostility of the school officials sent them in the direction of the more welcoming private schools. Getting a tour was very emotional for some parents. Christie, who has two children, was given access to her daughters' elementary school and felt very welcome to visit the school during the day. However, when she began the process of choosing her older daughter’s middle school, she was told that she could not visit the school while it was in session. The stress of not knowing where her daughter might end up created the following situation:
I went into TJ right after we did the TJ and Noe application, you know we were waiting and then one day I just ended up in the parking lot. I was off from work and I went into the building and the lady said normally we would give you a tour but today is not a good day and I said,

‘somebody is showing me this school today – I don’t care who it is, but somebody is showing it to me. I need to see this school with kids in the building.’

And she said’ all I can ask you to do is leave your name and number and someone will call you.’

I said ‘okay’

And about that time the counselor walked into the office. And she introduced me and I busted into tears – just hysterical – just flat out let her have it and I didn’t intend on it.

And she said – ‘I just cleared my calendar.’

I said ‘you are giving me a tour. I don’t know how long it is going to take. I don’t know how long I am going to be here. I don’t know how long I need you but I am going to tour this school.’ -Christie

Christie’s emotional response to being denied access was not uncommon in the study, but other parents were less insistent or chose to opt out of the public schools and instead enroll in a private school where they were more welcome to tour and learn

28 TJ is the reside school for Christie’s daughter and Noe is the magnet school where she hoped to gain admission. Because not all students are admitted to the magnet schools, Christie was nervous that her daughter might end up being assigned to her reside middle school.
about the school. When I told Christie that other parents were denied tours and did not get to see their child’s school prior to enrolling, she said her attitude was, “if you don’t let me in, you don’t get my child.”

Many parents reported being told that it was not a good day to visit, and when they insisted or pushed for a date to visit, they were told again that this was not a good day to visit. Barbara and her husband took a vacation day with the intention of visiting four schools in the B area of their cluster; however, both Stonestreet and Lane told them that the day would not work for the school. Barbara did not insist on getting another tour on a different day because she didn’t feel she could take off another day of work, and she knew that the two schools she was allowed to visit were her first choices anyway. She was not sure, at the time of her interview, whether Stonestreet and Lane would have allowed her to visit on another day.

While Barbara did not insist on visiting, Susan and her husband felt strongly about visiting their reside school beyond the open house. However, they found out that the school was not interested in having them visit. She said of her experience.

I called the school – no one returned my call. And when I called I told them the reason and she cut me off and said this is our open house date – and I said I have attended an open house. I am actually more interested in coming in during the day. And she said I will have them call you. And I said I would like to schedule something. Nobody called me back.

Then I went on the web site to get contact information and I got email addresses and I sent an email saying that we went to the Open House but we did not have
enough information and we had not attended schools in Louisville so we wanted to know more about them and we would like to experience the school environment during the day. And we will only take about 15-20 minutes of your time. And I said we are looking at this day – and we can schedule any time on this day.

A counselor emailed us back and said ‘we are all booked on that day – I can tell you it is a great school. Come to the open house and look on the web site.’

So I was like, ‘okay.’ I wrote back and I said ‘you mentioned that you were booked on that day – my husband and I are very interested in learning about the school – so I said just tell us what day will work for you – give us a day and a time and my husband and I will be there. There was a lot of lag time. I had said from your email it sounds like you are booked on that day but there may be other availability.

She wrote back – I talked to the principal and she said we do not allow parent visits because it is disruptive to the school environment. So at this point I thought I was going to cry. I thought, “Oh my god, because this was the one school that we thought might be good. so we were devastated. - Susan

Susan attempted to use a contact, a friend of the family who worked for the public education system, to get a tour of the school, but this contact was unable to achieve different results. Susan ended up never touring Norton Elementary, and when I visited
with her 18 months after our initial interview, she informed me that they had met with
the transplant coordinator for the Oldham County School District, and decided to build
a home in Oldham County. She enrolled her daughter in a private kindergarten while the
house was being built. The transplant coordinator for Oldham County met Susan and
her husband at a Starbucks in Oldham County to talk to them all about the schools, and
then gave them a personal tour of one of the elementary school buildings. Susan said
he was willing to spend as much time with them as they needed. The experience with
Oldham County Public Schools stood in stark contrast to the experience she had had
with Norton Elementary in JCPS.

Susan was not the only one who was not allowed access to Norton Elementary.
Michelle, an African American professional, relocated to Louisville from upstate New
York and moved into the Norton district right before the application deadline for the
school. She used her contract for buying a house as proof of address for filling out the
elementary school application. She was also interested in visiting Norton before her son
started in August, so she tried to arrange a visit in May when she came to Louisville.

As far as being inside the school it was probably new to us so my son was with
me, again he is a rising kindergartner, and I really kind of wanted to see
something and they told me, No, you cannot we are in testing. And we do not
allow anybody in the classrooms right now and I was like ‘well, when could we
do it.’ So I would not consider them, well.... (trails off). They were not overly
welcoming. They were happy enough to give me the forms but that was about it.

Researcher: Did they let you tour the school?

Michelle: No, they did not. I did ask when we could tour, and, she was probably the school secretary, and if I remember correctly, she said basically we are not going to do any tours between now and the end of the school year and after that we are gone for the summer so there really weren’t a lot of options there. It was kind of like; well you know if you end up here, then you can see us in August. It was kind of like that kind of thing so I didn't push it beyond that because she was pretty definite on that.” - Michelle

While being denied access to the public reside school was almost universal among participants, the public magnet schools and programs actively encouraged and welcomed parents to come and observe their programs. These schools were more dependent on people choosing their schools and employed a more market mentality to gaining students.

Creighton, who visited every school, public and private, within a five mile radius of her home, was very interested in Hawthorne’s Spanish-immersion magnet program. She asked if her daughter could shadow a student for half a day. At first the secretary hesitated because she had never heard this question before but ultimately she came back to Creighton and said that it would be fine for her daughter to shadow for the day.
Field Trips to the Open House

In the winter of 2011, I attended two open houses to get a feel for what parents experience when they visit the schools. I attended the Open House for Brandeis Elementary and one for Roosevelt Perry. Brandeis, a well-established math and science magnet program, always has more applications than places available. It has one of the lowest percentages of students on free and reduced lunch in the district, with only 34% of students enrolled, considerably lower than the district total of 62%. At the Brandeis Open House that I attended, all of the parents on the tour were middle-class and anxious to know about maximizing their chances of being accepted to Brandeis. The tour was given by a teacher and a former parent, who talked about her great love for the school. An interesting comment that she made during the tour was, "we have ZERO discipline problems at Brandeis...Zero." I remember it, because as a former teacher, I could not imagine that any school that had children in it could have zero discipline problems, yet that is what she offered to the parents as an explanation of the climate of the school.

Roosevelt Perry, a new technology magnet school with a recently renovated building downtown had, by far, the best display at the Showcase of Schools and an absolutely dynamic principal. While I was at the Showcase, there were always people at the Roosevelt Perry booth playing with the impressive educational technology. What was not at the Roosevelt Perry booth were statistics about their current student population. 93.8% of the students are on free and reduced lunch, and in past years it was classified as a low performing school because of its test scores. Roosevelt Perry
offered an Open House in February of 2011. I called ahead and reserved a space. When I arrived, the principal escorted me downstairs to a conference room with a lovely spread of bagels and fruit, coffee and juice. The room was set up with about forty chairs facing a screen with technology to demonstrate the curriculum of this new magnet. When I entered the room, it was empty. We waited ten or fifteen minutes; no parents or community members came. I was the only one in the audience. The principal gave me the talk she had prepared as well as the tour of the school that she had planned for a group of parents. I met some absolutely amazing educators and beautiful children. When I asked the principal if she thought she needed middle class buy-in to make her school work, she said absolutely not: all children can learn and we can have a successful school with the children we have. When I shared the rumor I had heard that the Brandeis principal actively recruited the best and the brightest pre-school children in the area to her school, the principal’s smile dropped for about three seconds before she went back to her practiced speech that she was not planning to distort the student body of the school but instead focus on educating all of the children she received.

The faculty I met on my tour of Roosevelt Perry and the planning and support room for focusing on the success of all students, were impressive. If parents had been there to see it, they might have been convinced to enroll. However, Roosevelt Perry’s location, west of 4th street on Broadway, did not draw suburban parents despite their impressive display at the Showcase and their commercial on YouTube.\(^\text{29}\) In examining

\(^{29}\) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMZpKmwDj2E
the YouTube video or observing the Showcase Display, it was evident that the school was trying to market itself to white and high-income parents. In the video they interview a professional white parent who talks about the way the school prepares students for technology careers, and two of the three students they focus on in the video are white. When I showed this video to my undergraduate education courses, I asked them to guess the racial demographics of the school. All of my classes guessed that the school was between 50% and 80% white. In reality, Roosevelt Perry is 23.1% white and 94% of students are on free and reduced lunch (JCPS, 2012). This active marketing to white and middle class parents in the video demonstrates the efforts of the school district to attract more middle class and white parents to the school buildings located in the Downtown and West End. The fact that no parents showed up at the Open House demonstrates the resistance of parents of privilege to school choice decisions that would interrupt racial and class geographies.

Did you like what you saw? The impacts of tours on parents

When I spoke with parents about their tours, I hoped to understand how they interpreted what they saw. Who was there and what was it like? Who asked questions and how did the school officials respond? When I asked Darla, a white professional, about who were on her tours, she replied, "I can’t really remember...all I remember is white people.” My tour of Brandeis was mainly white people as well, but I also met Michelle on my tour of Brandeis, an African American professional. Brandeis is a school where white students are the minority, but the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch is far below the district average.
Parents used tours to determine whether the other parents and the schools shared their values. They wanted to know if they would find community at the school. They wanted to see if what was happening at the school reflected their values and interests. Did they see a place for themselves and their child at the school? Creighton, who was open to exploring as many options as possible, said, “When I visited Lincoln, I immediately knew I would not go there even though it has an incredible new magnet program of the arts. When I was in the office, they had a TV on, and I was absolutely flabbergasted at that.” Creighton was not the only one disturbed by television use in the public schools. Angie was also disturbed by the use of television, in the before-school program run by the CEP program at the public schools. When she was told that the before school program consisted of a morning activity of watching television, she was shocked. To her this use of television was a clear violation of what constitutes an education environment. The collective distaste for television among middle class parents was a class coded exercise, one that Bourdieu views as the linchpin of how social hierarchy is maintained, by creating taste distinctions that classify people in certain social groups.

Distinction argues that “the aesthetic sense exhibited by different groups, and the lifestyles associated with them, define themselves in opposition to one another: taste is first and foremost the distaste of the tastes of others. This is because any cultural practice – wearing tweed or jeans, playing golf or soccer, going to museums or to auto shows, listening to jazz or watching sitcoms and so on – takes its social meaning, and its ability to signify social difference and
distance, not from some intrinsic property it has but from its location in a system of like objects and activities (Wacquant, 1998, p. 271).

For Angie and Creighton, the television was a clear signal that these particular schools or programs were not places where they would find community. Television viewing by small children is classed and becomes a marker. Television was a sign of an anti-intellectual environment, one that marked the school as outside of the middle class field.

Facilities and Curriculum

Facilities and curriculum were minor issues for parents and were usually mentioned last in our discussions. Partly because parents were not always allowed in the school buildings when they requested a tour, they often did not have access to the facilities or the ability to observe the curriculum being implemented. It also may be because, unlike many metropolitan areas, Louisville does not have huge discrepancies in the facilities between suburban and urban public schools. Because JCPS shares financial resources across the entire metropolitan area, school buildings are not in disrepair or lacking fundamental necessities for the grade levels they serve. Facilities do differ in terms of age and also in terms of the size of the grounds, as those located in suburban areas have more room for fields and larger playgrounds, and those in more densely populated areas in the city and inner ring suburbs often do not have spacious grounds.

Additionally, some the schools that have been built most recently, like Stopher, have
amazing facilities, but so do some of the new facilities in the city, like Stephen Foster Elementary, located in the middle of the West End.

Parents opting out of JCPS altogether were more likely to mention facilities than those deciding among JCPS schools. Parents who opted out of the public school system, those who had chosen Anchorage School or private schools, talked about the facilities at these locations as a motivating factor in their school choice process. Anchorage, the independent school district in Jefferson County; St. Francis, Kentucky Country Day and Collegiate were all described as schools with phenomenal facilities. Some parents were clearly disappointed with the facilities of all of the public schools, and this spurred them to examine their private school options. Martha, who was originally from rural Kentucky, relocated to Louisville from South Carolina. An important consideration in her choice of schools was the quality of the facilities at Anchorage Independent School.

I don’t care what my child does as far as a profession but I want him to have the education to be able to make that choice – not be limited because he didn’t have the resources and coming from a rural school in Kentucky – I did not have the choices. My husband had many more resources at JCPS than I ever had and I think the children at Anchorage have many more resources than JCPS. When you put 35 smart boards in the school in one year. When you have a library that is almost as big as the Middletown public library then you have resources...It is an amazing place. Art studios and science labs and multiple gyms separate from cafeteria. Those are resources that all children don’t have and I think that this is
important to be able to choose so that you have that option in the future. – Martha

Martha felt that the facilities were important not only for the access they gave her son, but also for what they indicated about the commitment to education at Anchorage School. Although this was not her primary reason for choosing Anchorage, it was an important consideration in deciding that Anchorage School was worthy of its reputation as a high quality school.

All of the parents who considered private schools also researched their public school options. Angie toured both private and public schools and the facilities were important in her decision. Angie described the difference between Field, a public school, and the private independent school Collegiate.

But then again Field is really small and they have one bathroom for the whole school and it just felt their gym was super outdated. I guess I want the world and I'm going to have to settle for something at some point. We also went and looked at Collegiate and we were there and it is amazing. It really is what it is supposed to be. There is a reason that people pay. – Angie

Angie immediately saw the difference in paying for a private school and was impressed by the heightened facilities offered by a private school education. Ultimately she chose to enroll her child in a private school, Kentucky Country Day School, despite the fact that it was far from her home, partly because of the facilities.
For Barbara, private school was not an option, so she limited her choices to the public schools in her cluster. She had already eliminated the magnet schools downtown and in the West End because of location so she was comparing the education at the schools in her cluster on the southwest side. However, she was disappointed in the facilities, even at her first choice school:

Medora the school itself is pretty old and they had a terrible playground to that point but the one thing I've I really was worried about was the quality of the playground because with boys especially they have to have a good playground because physical education is really important to me than being healthy having lots of playtime. Little boys are different than little girls they do not sit there quietly. It is important that they have a way to do that big movement every day so it has always been a part of my boys’ lives. I tried to get them outside for at least one hour a day in good weather every day, so anyway, I didn't like the playground of Medora. -Barbara

Even though Barbara did not like the playground at Medora or the building, she was able to set aside her dissatisfaction with the facilities. Ultimately she chose Medora for other reasons; the test scores and the small size as well as the strong parent involvement convinced her that Medora was the right school for her despite the lackluster facilities.

Marcy, who at the time lived in the Klondike reside of Cluster 5, put Stoffer as her first choice, largely because of facilities.
Stoffer had a beautiful new school and are offering a Chinese program and they just had a lot of the things that I was looking for and I was worried that we might have trouble getting into the magnet and Stoffer was great and it was in Area B in our cluster...it sounded good so we decided to try it and I put Stouffer down as number one. – Marcy

Marcy’s decision to place Stoffer as her first school jeopardized her chances to get into her reside school. Stoffer is a very popular school, as it is served by many of the new neighborhoods of large houses in the northeast. The new building and location among new popular neighborhoods means that even students living in the reside do not always get a place in the school. Marcy, however, went about her decision as a consumer, choosing the school with the best facilities, test scores, and distinct Chinese curriculum. However, because there are limited places in the schools, not all consumers will get their first choice; there is a shortage of places in the schools that are the most desirable.

Darla, who lived in the Bloom reside but chose to enroll in Coleridge Taylor, talked about the discrepancy between schools, as well, in looking at her choice between the neighborhood school and the downtown magnet Montessori School.

You mean you look at Bloom and you got trees and cutesy restaurants and old beautiful houses and then you have Coleridge Taylor and it is just smack dab in the middle of blahness. I mean, Bloom, you know, one of the major things that it has going for it is that it is a gorgeous school and you know when you walk in they have this huge public art. It's been a long time since I've been in there but
you know, well at Coleridge Taylor, you walk in, and it looks like...there are like these weird trophy cases that have been there since 1962 or something and it's very dark and it's not inviting at all and I even talked to the principal about the outside and she said one of the problems is that we are in a higher crime area and we've done things and then people you know take them and I think that's just the realities that they can't fix but you know they can still do something on the inside. – Darla

Darla believed that the physical appearance of Coleridge Taylor prevented parents from choosing the school, despite its great curriculum and course offerings. As the PTA president at Coleridge Taylor, she felt that the quality of the building further alienated parents who did not choose Coleridge Taylor as their first choice school. It was hard to sell a geographically distant school that was also unimpressive in its facilities in the midst of an impoverished neighborhood. The principal seemed unwilling to make improvements because past attempts did not last.

While many parents talked about lackluster facilities as their local schools, others noticed that the public schools often had greater resources than the private schools and were concerned about the facilities at the private schools. In the study, the opinions of facilities diverged between the independent schools and the catholic schools. The Catholic schools were the only private schools described as having insufficient facilities. Christie did not really want to consider private schools, but her husband pressured her
into touring the schools. Once they started touring, he agreed that the facilities
difference was another reason to not consider Catholic Schools.

We toured two private schools. He (her husband) is an IT tech guy. And they
both had computer labs and when we looked around the lab there were only
three computers that were actually plugged in but in the public school when you
went into the computer lab they were all plugged in and all of the classrooms
had three or four computers a piece. That is how Smyrna is. We go to the
computer lab and we have 30 Imacs in there. And I didn’t, you know, me-I just
saw the computers but he was like ‘there is not a cord on that one and not on
that one.’ – Christie.

Susan was also not impressed with the facilities at one of the Catholic schools, and
chose not to apply there because of those facilities.

We did go to St. Alberts – they were very welcoming but I am trying to think. It is
a school that has grown quicker than they can keep up with. The kindergarten
you have to walk through a parking lot to a building where the nuns use to live
and to get to the cafeteria the kids have to put on their coats and walk through
the parking lot. The hallways are so super small. I kind of felt like – I felt better
about that school then some of the other schools I had gone into. I was just
questioning whether we were getting a value out of it. – Susan

Although all parents in the study mentioned facilities at one point in the interview
process, impressive facilities were not the primary reason for choosing a school. It was
often a secondary consideration, with parents using strong facilities as proof that the school was a good choice. Because many parents did not visit magnet schools or West End schools even when they were assigned to them, the quality of those facilities was not important. They did not know about the computer labs at Brandeis or new Foster Traditional School building, and they did not see the new addition on the Roosevelt Perry School downtown. Facilities mattered only if parents were actually considering the school, and the schools in the West End and Downtown had a difficult time attracting middle class parents to come and have a look.

**Test Scores and Research**

There is much discussion about whether parents consider test scores when they choose a school. The research into the Louisville case indicates that test scores are very important to parents, and the label of "low-performing school" is even more important. Many parents mentioned this term specifically, saying that they were not interested in their children attending a low-performing school. However, parents whose children attended schools that were low-performing often mentioned that test scores do not tell you everything about a school. Every single participant mentioned looking at test scores. Some looked at them in detail; some looked for categories of low-performing and high performing. Almost every participant mentioned using the JCPS web site as a source of information on test scores. Participants also used the Great Schools web site to find test results and to read parent comments about the schools. Participants also reported accessing information about the schools from the state data sites. Other parents did significant analysis of the data. Marcy and Barbara, in particular, who had
both relocated to Louisville, worked with the data quite extensively to help with the
decision. Marcy described her process:

I had downloaded all of the test scores that the Courier-Journal had made
available. I had built spreadsheets of all of the different attributes of the schools
you know to balance against each other, I might even have some of those
sheets, if you are interested, if I could find the... I might be all to dig them up. I
graph, I'm such a nerd I graphed all of the test scores over time so I could see if
the school seem to be getting better or worse over time I and you know – I
looked at so many different things I looked at new facilities versus old facilities
and staff. – Marcy

At this point in the interview, Marcy went into her home office, dug around for a bit,
and then returned with a binder of information she had gathered, including the graphs
she described in the quote. She said, “I downloaded the report card data off of the sites
I mean I wasn’t kidding when I said that I really worked on this, I mean it was a big
project for me so here is my final spreadsheet.”

Barbara used a similar process to research the schools and she brought her binder of
spreadsheets and calculations to our interview. She described her process thus:

I'm not from here and the way I process information I tend to want to gather
data and sift through it because I want things to be set. You know, I don't want
too much personal bias. I want some hard data when I was choosing the school.
I want to look at, you know, test performance was important to me. Discipline
was important to me. I picked out some criteria that were important and this is all going to look entirely insane. So I downloaded the school profiles and for every school in our cluster and I pulled out some criteria from these and lined them up because I did not want to overlook the school just because it was far away. What if there was a gem out there or something that would work in Area A. I didn't want to just say, I know it's too far away, although that was a huge criteria at least it wasn't an eliminator for me. – Barbara

At this point in the interview, Barbara describes her process of assigning points to schools based upon accountability, market share, staff education, PTA participation, discipline record, proximity to her home. She uses this complicated procedure to confirm that her first choice school is Medora, the school that has the highest percentage of white students and the smallest percentage of students on free and reduced lunch of the four resides schools she was considering in her cluster, 78.8% white compared to 50.4% white at Layne, and 66.3% at Stonestreet, and 57.2% white at Fairdale. The free and reduced lunch participation rate at Medora is 58.6% compared to 68.8% at Stonestreet, 77.9% at Fairdale, and 85.9% at Layne. Her choice, although grounded in mountains of data, clearly reproduces her racial and class privilege in the composition of the school she ultimately chooses for her child.

Summary

The marketing of schools at the Showcase of Schools and through Open Houses and Tours is constrained by the lack of a market mentality among JCPS employees and some parents, who do not feel a need to market their product to all. Furthermore, the
staff resistance to giving tours or making parents feel welcome runs counter to marketing principles. The movements of people working for the district and the parents who are already enrolled in a school position themselves to maintain their class and race privilege by offering information about schools to some and withholding information from others. Middle class parents use networks of friends and colleagues to market their schools but do not actively market those schools at the Showcase, where the entire prospective student population has access. Furthermore, all of these movements to resist the assignment plan can be accomplished without blatant expressions of racism or use of racist language. In fact, many parents did not fully grasp the racial and class ramifications of the marketing or not marketing of the schools.

Furthermore, school officials contributed to the lack of information as they limited parental access to school buildings and staff when parents were the most anxious about how their child would adjust to school. Only those parents who insist are granted access, and gaining access does not mean that the students are treated kindly as a result. Because social networks are classed and raced, word of mouth transmission of information tends to recreate social stratification as parents of one social class tend to be advised to attend schools where they will be the majority. This informal network of information that passes privileged information to the privileged coupled with the real movements against integration through marketing or lack of marketing strategies, demonstrates the lengths to which school officials and parents will go to preserve a racial or class order in the school.
Showcase of Schools Display for Price (School Composition: 21.8% white)
Showcase of Schools Display for Eisenhower (School Composition: 71.5% white)
Chapter Seven: CONCLUSIONS and IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

“Every step I take I am trying to make the world a better place for my kids and the kids they are growing up with. It is as simple as that. I don’t know why anybody does anything else, to be honest.” – Sage

When I first began this project, I had an idealized view of what I was going to find and what I would be able to conclude. I was not, in fact, the blank slate, the scientist looking for an unknown answer in an unbiased manner, untainted by personal history or identity. I came to this project from a place of regional identity, a connection to a city I loved and left – a place misunderstood or ignored by much of the Northeastern and Western United States. To be honest, I came from a point of pride. I had spent much of my time in my graduate classes talking about the successes of integration and busing in Louisville and deconstructing the segregated school districts that existed in the North where I had lived for the past twenty years. I was disturbed by the racism of my Northern neighbors; it was foreign to my preconceived idea of the enlightened northerner, and I was eager to present evidence from the successes of Louisville.

I did not find what I expected to find. Of course, reality is always more complicated than the easy dichotomies of fairy tales- good and evil, the villain and the hero, easily identified right from the start. Yet I feel that it is important to recognize what I wanted to find and how I think about the role of public policy in society.

While I was writing this dissertation, I attended a memorial service to honor the members of the Kentucky Bar Association who had passed away the previous year. My
father, who had valiantly fought a rare brain tumor for eight years, had died nine months before, and I returned to Louisville to attend this service. One of the speakers that day was the Reverend Kevin Crosby, an African American preacher who is well-regarded in Louisville. His sermon began with the biblical verses of the story of the Good Samaritan – the story of the man who is robbed and beaten and left for dead on the side of the road. I was pleased, because this was one of my father’s favorite stories, one he had told us many times, and it seemed fitting that this story would be told at his memorial service.

After the story was recounted, Crosby began his interpretation of the tale and what it tells us about life. He said, "there are three kinds of people in the story -the first man, who attacks and robs the man; the second man, a preacher who chooses to ignore the man injured on the side of the road; and the third man, who pours oil in his wound, nurses him and pays for a place in the inn for him. Then Crosby said, we still have these three kinds of people in the world. The first kind of man believes what’s yours is mine and I am going to take it, the second believes what’s mine is mine and I am going to keep it, and the third believes what’s mine is yours and I am going to share it. Now, the part of the story that my father always loved, and the part that he felt was the most misunderstood, was the importance of the identity of the Samaritan in the story, the third man. Because this story is so iconic, many people associate the word Samaritan with a kind and helpful person, but at this time and place, a Samaritan was a member of a group of people who were marginalized by society and distrusted – an unlikely person to be the helpful one, according to popular belief. Yet this man, the one
from the marginalized minority group, was the one who helped, while the second man, the minister of the same faith and heritage, chose to ignore the man who had been injured.

For me, this parable is not about charity; it speaks to a concept much more revolutionary. It speaks to our ability to widen our idea of community; to have a new understanding of whom we consider “our people.” The Good Samaritan asks the listener to widen the circle, to be a brother or sister to all of humankind. The Samaritan was not the privileged man offering charity, but rather the marginalized man extending kindness to someone outside his community. Fundamentally, I believe that this is what much of the social policy born of the Civil Rights Movement in America tries to do. Policy inspired by humanitarian values attempts to create systems that act as good Samaritans – to reach out to everyone, to include everyone at the table of civilization. Yet the instruments we choose to implement these policies are imperfect and at times our goals for them are unclear or perhaps conflicting. There are different ideas about the proper way to widen the circle, or what inclusion truly entails. Despite this, we continue to try to craft institutions that minister, educate and heal.

I came to this project wanting to understand how we can shape public policy in a way that compels people to be the Samaritan, to say what is mine is yours and I am going to share it. Although many still grapple with the role of government in compelling people to perform acts of benevolence, certainly most of us can agree that the government has a role in saying a person cannot act in such a way as, "What's yours is
mine and I am going to take it." We seem to have a clear view that violating the rights, property or person of another is immoral, and public policy should redress such wrongs. Yet, what about the person who says, "What’s mine is mine and I am going to keep it." This question is so much more complicated because it is about preserving privilege. There are many who believe that we have no right to expect others to share their privilege or wealth. This seems to be the case even when we have the knowledge that this wealth was created on an incredibly uneven playing field that guaranteed that some people would have the opportunity to gain wealth and others would be systematically denied it. In general, most of us do not feel comfortable on an individual level of creating a public policy that forces an individual to relinquish his/her property to another individual. Yet we do maintain (quite thinly at this moment) a government system with a progressive tax policy fashioned such that each individual contributes his/her share with the aim of providing services and opportunities to all regardless of ability to pay. This tax system, however maligned and ravaged by the Republican party and tea party movement, attempts to create a public policy mechanism that compels those with means to give back a piece of their extraordinary profits for the greater good. Our public school system is part and parcel of this mechanism. It is how we invest in the youth of our country- to offer some semblance of equality of opportunity to all children regardless of the circumstances of their birth. We have through the years developed laws and regulations that have attempted to make this education system more just, more productive and more accessible to all.
By examining one time and one place, Louisville, Kentucky, and the market for its schools, I aimed to illuminate how public policy is enacted, manipulated and maneuvered by the people it touches. In doing so, I demonstrated the methods parents used to choose schools in one place under a particular type of assignment plan. I demonstrated in this process how the race and class of parents operated in the decision-making while being largely absent from the majority of their direct speech. I also showed how, after probing, and near the end of a long interview, or after the audio recorder was turned off, a few parents would directly mention race or class in their discussions. In general, parents took great pains to distance themselves from the racist rhetoric associated with anti-busing campaigns of the past. The vast majority of parents, at one time or another during the interview, took the time to describe their own anti-racist feelings and establish a narrative of equality. However, parents then described a decision-making process that kept them isolated within their own class or racial group. These absences are important in understanding how the logistics of assignment plans may not be enough to overcome the ways that parents subvert public policy. I think it is important to recognize that the participants demonstrated through their testimony that racism is now socially unacceptable in southern society; certainly that was not the case when my grandfather was growing up in Louisville. Yet the post-civil rights racism, or what I call northern style of racism, which replaced a more direct, explicit racism, is also destructive to equality aims and persists in maintaining a racial hierarchy.
The Jefferson County Public School District is not the racial utopia I had hoped it was, nor is it the stereotype of southern bigotry that our media narratives maintain. It is, like all places in America, struggling constantly with a racial and class hierarchy that is very much real but very rarely spoken about in any direct way. American culture and media resist recognizing racial and class castes that are realities and virtually impossible to escape. As a result, the actors in the system, parents and school district officials, are left with a set of codes and ways of speaking about their lives that construct their experiences as choices that are "race-neutral" and "class-neutral," merely "natural" outgrowths of the daily necessities of life. These unspoken rules that organize social life determine tastes and preferences and ultimately construct racial and class geographies.

However, that does not mean policy-makers are off the hook. We are all too aware of the dangers of fixed caste systems and the benefits of diverse environments to give up on perfecting policies that make our schools and our societies more equal; it is, I believe, our responsibility to keep working at perfecting our institutions.

It was argued prior to Brown v. Board that the lack of access to integrated schools prevented those in non-dominant positions from advancing in society. Yet interventions permit access to those institutions such as Jefferson County’s assignment plan demonstrate the unflappable nature of power to sustain itself. Bourdieu’s proposition that habitus is durable but not indelible is crucial in understanding shifts in power and social position. Reproduction is real, but our identities are not our destiny. The participants in the study demonstrated through their choice process and the articulation of that process that choices by and large reproduced social class and race stratification,
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Original Reside School</th>
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<th>% Free and Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>New Reside School for Parents who Moved</th>
<th>School Assigned to by JCPS</th>
<th>% white</th>
<th>% Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>FINAL SCHOOL</th>
<th>% white</th>
<th>% Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Net Impact of Choice</th>
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<td>Bates 68% 50%</td>
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<td>Wheatley 12% 84%</td>
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<td>Audubon Traditional Magnet 63% 31%</td>
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Table 7.1 Net Impact of School Choice
yet they also demonstrated that parents of color and low income parents sought educational opportunities that would enhance their children's academic success with the caveat that those environments must be socially safe for their students. When parents choose schools, whether consciously or unconsciously they are choosing environments that are reflective of their values and their identities. When the assignment plan undoes this aim by selecting schools that are outside of their chosen group, they, more often than not, resist the placement and wait another year to be placed or choose private schools. On Table 7.1: Net Impact of School Choice, the demographics of each school choice is detailed. The vast majority of participants enrolled in schools that were whiter and/or wealthier than their original reside school or JCPS assigned school. Some parents chose schools that were wealthier with a lower percentage of white students. One parent who enrolled in a school that was not wealthier and had more students of color was Ruby, an African American mother who had to leave her neighborhood near Medora Elementary School because of harassment from white neighbors. Her school choice reproduced her race and class position because the demographics of the school mirrored her race and class identity. Despite this tendency to reproduce race and class privilege, there were parents, like Darla and Michelle who actively sought more diverse school environments for their children by choosing a more diverse magnet school over their reside school to which they were both admitted.

The parents who resisted placements in schools with more students of color and low income students, did so, not out of a conscious or articulated hatred or dislike for
people not like them, but from a more invisible selection process that seemed to have a predetermined set of choices that matched their race and class position. This finding is important because it suggests that the tired narrative that the media still tells of a strident and direct racism in the south is an old narrative that no longer stands up to the testimony and lived experiences of parents. Racism exists in the south, but in a different form, one that reflects what I have termed a "northern style" of preserving privilege through seemingly "color-blind" mechanisms.

The Vocabulary of Choice

Because so often parents construct environments that reproduce race and class divisions, using "choice" to select schools without institutional support to aid marginalized students has been shown to increase segregation by both race and class (Bifulco et al., 2009; Holme, 2002; Koedel et al., 2009; Schneider and Buckley, 2002). The Louisville program uses the rhetoric of "choice" to attract parents; its information booklet (See Appendix C for cover) about the assignment plan is titled "Choices," and the school district uses that terminology in its marketing materials and promotions to parents. Milton Friedman's assertion that school choice will allow parental consumers to use the mechanisms of the market's profit-seeking behavior to improve schools is not something that is borne out by the research. School choice has been shown to increase racial and class segregation, and racial and class segregation in schools has been shown to depress the achievement of low-income and minority students. The lack of consensus on what constitutes a profit or success in schooling means that the very idea of using choice to maximize consumer satisfaction does not necessarily equate with any
particular "success" outcome, as different parents may define success in different ways, and their definitions of success could differ from the definitions of success determined by corporations or the government. Neoliberal ideas of applying market conditions to all areas of civic life are sold to the public through the rhetoric of "choice." The attractiveness of this concept, that each individual chooses each aspect of his/her life, relates to national ideas about freedom and progressive ideas about equality.

Furthermore, despite the brand of Choices put on the assignment plan, most of the parents in the study did not express that they had a true choice. Certainly, Louisville parents have choices, but the choices they have depend on their financial means and their access to information through both formal and informal networks. The data from the participants in the study indicate that the choices parents have are not the same, and low income parents do not believe they have any choices at all. For families that do not have a stable address because of financial insecurity and relocation, the deadlines for choosing a school six months ahead of time can be quite impossible to manage.

Furthermore, ultimately if a family is choosing among Jefferson County Public Schools, the final selection of the school is made by the school district. Families are merely allowed to list their top preferences, and then the school district assigns them to a school. In essence, the choice is a false construct.

**Implications for Public Policy: Crafting Policy in a “Color-Blind” Era**

The assignment plan in Jefferson County aims to maintain diverse schools, and it purports to do that through assigning students to schools by balancing the number of students who come from two types of neighborhoods, A (low-income, high minority)
and B (high-income, majority white). However, there is no guarantee that the students who are assigned to schools end up attending those schools. Because parents can opt out - not show up for their placement-- the racial and or socioeconomic demographic achieved may be vastly different from the goal. In order to understand the implications of parent testimony about schools, it is also crucial to consider how successful the school assignment plan is in achieving diverse schools. From my small sample of parents, I can see that parents from middle and high income families who are assigned to low-income or non-magnet high-minority schools do not choose to enroll their children in their assigned school, and from the data on the composition of schools in the 2011-2012 school year, it is evident that this is not isolated to my sample.

The school district reports the racial demographic of students as White, Black and Other. These categories are a bit misleading according to the testimony of one of my participants, a teacher who reported that her elementary school was classifying immigrants from Somalia, black Africans, in the Other category so that the school did not look "too black." Because the classification of students in the Other category is unclear, it seems most perspicacious to use the White category to understand the racial demographics of the schools.

The composition of the Jefferson County School District elementary schools as a whole is 48.5% White, 37% Black and 14.5% Other. Jefferson County as a whole, including all residents, not just those enrolled in school, is 70.5% White Non-Hispanic, 21% Black, 2.3% Asian, .4% American Indian or Pacific Islander, and 4.5% Latino/Hispanic (US Census, 2011). Clearly, the racial demographics of the County are
not reflected in the composition of the public school student body. In the 2010-2011 school year, 10,395 elementary students in grades K-5 who lived in Jefferson County attended a non-public school, which gives the Jefferson County School District an 81.5% share of the elementary student marketplace (Jefferson County, 2012). 18.5% of students in grades K-5 attended private or home schools in the 2011-2012 school year.

The goal to maintain racially diverse schools in JCPS is easier to achieve in the affluent suburbs, where the schools are more attractive to parents because of high test scores and proximity to the homes of high income parents. Students who would add to the diversity, namely low income students of color, have less of a choice in school assignment because of financial restraints and can therefore be placed in these schools to diversify the student body without much active resistance from parents. Although my two low-income minority parents in the study expressed displeasure with the way their children were treated in suburban schools, they did not feel they had a role in actively choosing a different school because of economic restraints.

Achieving racial diversity in the areas of town that have been historically African-American and/or low income has proven to be particularly difficult, as this requires moving white and/or high income students from schools near their homes to schools far from their homes. For the participants in my study, white students and high income students who received these assignments opted out of attending the public schools as a result. Of the 90 elementary schools in Louisville, fourteen of them are less than 25% White, and fifteen elementary schools have greater than 90% of students on free and reduced lunch (JCPS, Elementary School Data Book, 2012). 62% of elementary students
in the entire district are in the free and reduced lunch program, and there are two elementary schools, Stopher and Norton, in the district, which have a free and reduced lunch population of only 14% and 24% respectively.

So, despite the policy's intent to maintain diverse schools, the populations in the elementary schools are still uneven in terms of both race and class; there are many schools that are predominantly low-income and/or predominantly students of color. Although the assignment plan does enable more diversity in suburban schools, there is still an economic and racial divide that is not adequately addressed by the plan. Resistance to being assigned a low-income school when a person lives in a high-income reside means that the aims of the plan are undone by parental choice - choices that are available only to parents with time or money. However, there does seem to be some room to improve the plan to make it more likely that more school buildings are both racially and economically diverse.

**Policy Suggestions for the School Board**

It may seem strange to have concrete policy suggestions in a dissertation that critiques the ability of policy to overcome parents' desires to preserve race and class privilege. However, I do not mean to suggest in my analysis of the way parents reproduce class and race in their school choices that there is no room for improvement in our policy or a place for policy in achieving equity aims. Although parents resisted placement in schools outside of their racial and class milieu, there was room for creating diverse schools within the sample of parents with whom I spoke. Certainly, there were parents
who were looking for a more diverse environment, either because they identified as a high-income African-American professional or because they valued diversity for personal and political reasons. But for these parents, most notably Michelle, Felicia, Ella, Darla, Winona, and Laurel, certain aspects of the assignment plan made it more difficult for them to choose diverse schools. Through the testimony of parents, certain aspects of the assignment process were identified as obstructions to choice and prevented parents from choosing more diverse or geographically distant schools. In some cases, these obstacles were identified as the reason parents decided to choose private schools and abandon the public school choice process. By looking at the primary policy level, the logistics and regulations related to the school assignment plan, I believe that there is room within the public system as it is currently constituted to design a plan that attracts more parents, retains more students within the public school system, and is more reflective on how the policy can achieve its aims without the cost falling more heavily on low-income and/or single parents. In this primary level of analysis, I am cognizant of the fact that there are still parents who will resist school assignment and choice within the public school system as an act of preserving privilege. But the data received from my participants suggest that there is some room for designing a system that broadens voluntary participation in the school assignment plan. These logistical changes include instituting sibling preference, new magnet schools in the suburbs, guaranteed placement in the reside school, enhanced use of the NCLB transfer provision, and enhanced recruitment and training of front office staff.
Office Staff Key to Attracting Parents

Office staff were a consistent point of contact for participants in the study, and some of the most abrasive interactions with schools occurred with office staff. Parents expressed feeling slighted by people in the office. Given the complicated nature of the assignment plan and the sensitivity of parents in relationship to school options, it seems imperative that the Jefferson County School District put their very best administrative assistants in the elementary schools' main offices and that the school district do extensive training with these staff on an annual or biannual basis, explaining the assignment plan and giving as much information as possible to these staff members about the options for parents. In addition, these staff members should receive diversity training or cultural competence training to enhance their skills in communicating with all of the parents in the school. Although principals and teachers have a role in communicating with parents about the assignment plan, school tours and open houses, the reality of a school necessitates that office staff will be a chief point of contact for parents interested in the school. Therefore, regardless of the assignment plan that is ultimately chosen, intensive training of office staff about the assignment plan is required.

Transportation to Before-School and from After-School

One of the biggest logistical obstacles for parents was the lack of transportation to before-school sites and from after-school sites. Parents could not consider geographically distant schools in part because they knew that they had to provide part
of the transportation during the day. They were not considering merely the idea of putting their child on a bus to travel across town for school, but also that they would also be traveling to that school each day to drop of their child at before-school or pick them up from after-school. Two working parents in a home is more prevalent in Louisville than it was in the 1970’s when the original plan was developed; therefore the transportation for the program cannot happen in the same way. If the school district did provide transportation to before-school and from after-school care, then parents would not have to factor in their own commuting time to the school choice process.

**Developing a Market Mentality**

If the school district is serious about promoting the idea of choice and encouraging parents to choose the schools that best fit their children, it needs to promote a market mentality in all of their faculty and staff. The district labels the school assignment booklet *Choices*, yet currently the parents are not treated as customers making a choice of a product. They are treated as captives required to follow the will of the school district - a mentality that alienates those who cannot opt out and disengages parents with means. You would be hard pressed to find a store that is trying to sell you a product that will not allow you to see that product before you purchase it. Yet that is exactly what the Jefferson County School District does with their product. The vast majority of parents in the study were denied access to one or more schools. Even parents who lived in the neighborhood and had both race and class privilege were denied entry to the school buildings. They were not allowed to see the schools or meet
the teachers and were told that their presence would be disruptive to the school setting. Furthermore, at the one marketplace to sell their school, The Showcase of Schools, employees and parents actively discouraged parents from learning about their schools, as booths were purposefully not staffed or parents were ignored or given little information about the school. Parents were told by school officials or other parents that there were methods of gaining a place in the school that ran counter to the information provided in the Choices booklet, and parents, especially, were exclusionary in their conversations with prospective families about gaining a spot in schools. Furthermore, the access to the showcase and tours was not equal among income groups, as some parents had ease of access to the Showcase, and other parents were not aware or were unable to secure transportation to the Showcase of Schools. If the school district wants to keep its assignment plan in place, it needs to develop a market mentality in its faculty, staff and parent volunteers.

Sibling Preference for Magnet Schools

By far, the most emotional testimony from parents related to the separation of siblings. For some parents this was an issue of equity among siblings, and for others it was about family cohesiveness. Mothers working in paid employment, all but one of the participants, expressed the need to simplify life, and the great number of responsibilities required at work and as a mother involved in a school. Having children attend more than one school meant multiple open houses, multiple choir concerts, sports events and school-wide events. Furthermore, parents expressed the feeling that
schools became a community for their family, and being involved in more than one community was too divisive in their family life. All of the participants who spoke about magnet schools said that they would have been much more likely to apply and/or enroll in a magnet school if sibling placement were guaranteed. For schools, the resistance to sibling placement may come from the feeling that siblings differ in their ability to benefit from a particular school’s program. Brandeis, in particular, has a strict admission requirement that is based upon students achieving at high levels on their pre-kindergarten screening, and it is possible that not all siblings in a family would achieve at the same high level. It is worth considering whether Brandeis, like the Catholic schools, could encourage an additional year of pre-kindergarten for siblings who are not ready for the academic requirements of kindergarten at Brandies. Additionally, the school could guarantee placement for the first year, and then evaluate the appropriateness of the placement after that year. Many parents did not even seriously look at magnets after reading that siblings could be separated, and this seems to be a simple rule to change to encourage more families to invest in magnet schools. Additionally, the magnet schools themselves would benefit from greater involvement from families when they have more than one child attending the school. Magnet schools were the only schools in which there was active selection of schools in low income or high minority areas, and the reputation of the magnet schools in Louisville could ensure that even greater numbers of students would take advantage of the specialization they offered. Opening up guaranteed spots for siblings would encourage even more families to apply to magnet schools, thereby filling these schools and increasing the need for even more
magnet locations. Changing this aspect of the assignment plan could be accomplished quite easily. The added benefit of attracting more students to magnet schools and eventually opening additional magnets is that it would free up spaces in some of the more desirable suburban resides schools.

More Magnets, and Magnet Schools in the Suburbs

Magnet schools were very popular with parents I spoke with, although most of them preferred the established magnet programs with good reputations: Traditional Schools, Math Science and Technology (MST) and Montessori Schools and The Brown School. Although the school district attempted to start a plethora of other magnet schools with a large number of themes, parents did not see these as valid magnet options. They were more interested in the highly sought after, established magnet schools. The traditional and MST magnet schools were especially popular because they offered preferred admission to the more competitive middle and high school tracks in the districts; parents understood that attending Brandeis Elementary would allow their child to have preferred admission status to Dupont Manuel High School, and attending a traditional elementary school would confer preferred admission status to Male High School. Yet parents felt that there were not enough spots at these magnet schools and that they were actively discouraged from applying because of the competitive admissions process. Beyond the academic competitiveness of the magnet schools, parents whose children attended expressed an affection for the diverse community that was created in these schools, a feeling that ran counter to that in the resides schools.
When parents spoke about schools and neighborhoods, they expressed a feeling of ownership towards the schools in close proximity to their homes - the non-magnet schools. Because some of the parents in the study had bought their homes prior to the new assignment plan, they assumed when they made their purchase that they would attend their reside school. This ownership sentiment ran counter to the agenda of the school district, which was attempting to move away from a neighborhood school mentality. However, because so many schools were built in the middle of neighborhoods or homes built up around schools, this neighborhood sentiment persisted. The neighborhood mentality made it difficult for students who were bused into schools to be equal participants in their school building, as there was a divide between the neighborhood kids and the bus kids. The assignment plan produced resentment towards "outsiders" who gained admission to suburban schools. This "outsider" status was demonstrated in parent dialogue and decision-making related to the Showcase of Schools. Parents in charge of organizing the booths actively resisted marketing the schools to outsiders in the hope of reserving spaces for students who live in the neighborhood. Even if students overcame barriers to applying, the treatment that they received in these schools afterwards would likely not be equal to what neighborhood kids received. Dovidio's (2004) research on intergroup contact suggests that for intergroup contact to reduce bias, group members need to have equal group status, a condition which is absent in a school that has a neighborhood/outsider mentality. The magnet schools, where all students participate in a lottery or application
to a school outside their neighborhood, were able to achieve this sort of equal group
status condition in their schools.

When magnet schools were originally instituted in Louisville, they were placed in
the downtown/west end area of town with the hope of attracting white suburban
families out of the suburbs to more racially and economically diverse schools. Because
of the changes in demographics and geography in Jefferson County, and because of the
incredible over-enrollment of some of the magnet schools, most notably the Brown
School and Brandeis, it seems logical that the school district could develop additional
campuses for these schools. By placing one of these schools on the southern border
and one on the eastern border of the school district, the school district could create
school communities that are geographically diverse, which would allow a greater feeling
of ownership by all students - not just ones who live in the neighborhood. Two
campuses that would be good candidates would be Zachary Taylor and Blake
Elementary Schools. Zachary Taylor, which is a lower performing school in the northeast
that lies geographically between Stopher Elementary and Norton Elementary, two high-
achieving, over-subscribed schools in the east end. By converting Zachary Taylor to
"Brown East" or "Brown II," the district could capitalize on the popularity and tradition
of the Brown School, and draw in families who are interested in the Brown curriculum
but are not interested in the distant commute. Additionally, they could open up spaces
in Norton and Stopher for students from outside of the neighborhood, as some students
from these neighborhoods would enroll in Brown East rather than Stopher. Because
Zachary Taylor is currently an under-performing school, the transition would aid the
district in converting this school from an under-performing school to a high performing school. In the South End, the school district could use the current Blake Elementary School to house a Brandeis II or Brandeis South. Because this elementary school is at the intersection of 65 south and the outer belt (2-65) there would be easy access for parents wishing to enroll in a Math Science Technology magnet school for the educational experience and to be put on the track to attend Manuel High School. In addition, it could get more people interested in magnet schools in general; when parents in the vicinity come to see Brandeis II, they can also be encouraged to visit Brandeis I. By providing two more magnet options, the school district would open up more spaces to parents who would like to consider magnets but are fearful of the low rate of admission.

Reserved Spots

All of the previous suggestions could be implemented under the current assignment plan. However, it is worth considering whether the structure of the assignment plan should not be changed altogether. Currently, the school assignment plan is incredibly successful at moving students from low income to high income areas in large part because the parents in low-income areas have fewer choices for opting out of the school district. However, that stability of the district is compromised by the number of families choosing to move across the border into Oldham and Bullitt County to attend school. If the school district guaranteed placement of students in schools that went with their address, then the school district would see a larger share of the high income
growth in Jefferson County that is currently going to Oldham County. This reservation of spots does not mean that the school district would have to give up its diversity aims. The school district could still require that 15% of spots in high performing schools be reserved for students who live in a reside that has a low-performing school. A provision in No Child Left Behind requires districts to allow students who are attending a low-performing school to transfer to another school. However, parents in the study did not get the letter notifying them that this was an option until a week before school started, or sometimes during the first week of school. By setting up the composition of the schools from the start as an 85% reside, 15% from low-performing resides, the school district could ensure that all schools had some racial and economic diversity. As development continues and schools in the more sparsely populated areas of the district become more crowded, the district could add schools without compromising the 15% requirement. JCPS impacts the wealth and vitality of the entire Metro Louisville area. The assignment plan introduces a level of uncertainty that discourages middle class people from purchasing homes in Jefferson County or enrolling in public schools when they do. Currently, over 10,000 elementary aged children attend private schools in Jefferson County and the growth of Oldham and Bullitt Counties to take advantage of the schools there is tremendous. By guaranteeing placement in a reside school and focusing resources on magnet schools and the 15% from under-performing schools in all high-performing schools, the district could improve on its ability to attract middle class families to invest in homes in Jefferson County. Changing to this sort of plan would require that the school district invest a great deal of the resources saved on the buses
and transportation issues in marketing the magnet schools and building their programs. Additionally, the district should provide a teacher on special assignment to work with low-income families or those attending low-performing schools with the application process to the high-achieving schools. The data from my participants suggests that there is not enough access and understanding of the current application process, and this would be true for any new application process. Therefore, it would be important for the school district to do outreach to head start programs, churches, and other community groups to advise low-income families on the possibility of enrolling in a high-achieving reside school in another neighborhood.

**Suggestions for Future Study**

Future studies of the Jefferson County school district could include a more detailed look at the experiences of students in schools. Speaking with the parents develops an understanding of how students arrive at a school and hints at why students may change schools, but it does not tell us much about what exactly students experience in the school environment. A qualitative study of the experience of attending magnet schools or schools outside of their neighborhood, including riding the bus with students and conducting participant observations in integrated schools, would reveal how students experience the assignment plan. Interviewing teachers and staff about their experiences with the assignment plan would also speak to the lived experience of the policy.
Certainly, in considering the Jefferson County School District, there is room for using quantitative measures to determine which aspects of a school are most compelling to parents. Louisville could develop an informational web site about the school district for families to conduct research on schools. Tracking which aspects of the school parents research would be helpful in further identifying factors that are important to them. In addition, survey data of parents who did not attend JCPS would give a better picture of why parents are opting out of the school district. The research conducted by the school district after the assignment plan was instituted only polled those parents who chose to enroll in the JCPS system. Because JCPS has an extensive amount of individual student-level data, there exists the possibility to do mixed-methods study on outcomes related to desegregation and magnet schools in relation to student achievement, college enrollment rates, contributions to society, and values related to diverse neighborhoods and school environments.

Questions to Be Addressed

Much of the critical work of this research suggests that equity in schools and decreased racial and class stratification may better be addressed by policies outside of schools. Racial and class stratification in our housing patterns, development funding and urban planning policy impact our schools and deserve to be considered together with school construction and assignment decisions. Currently, the public agencies that manage housing, transportation and development do not dialogue with the school district or plan together. Comprehensive development plans should be developed through bringing together multiple public agencies. The ability of schools to craft
assignment plans that create more integration than our neighborhoods possess is a difficult task. This is especially difficult when the choices of parents clearly have "raced" and "classed" effects, even though parents do not know or admit to these considerations. Therefore, decreasing segregation and racial and class stratification requires consultation among many different public agencies.

Underneath the conversation about school assignment exists deeper questions about the measures of school quality. How can we have a more expansive conversation about school choice that addresses how we construct what a "good" school is, and what test scores do and do not mean about a school's "quality." So many of my participants experienced test scores as a true measure of school quality. Although Ruby, Christy and Barbara all felt comfortable that their schools were "good" even though they did not have the highest test scores, almost all participants listed test scores as a major consideration in choosing a school. So many parents took these test measures as the best approximation of the quality of a school. There did not seem to be another method for parents to measure a school's worth. Aspects like a community of learners, a school committed to social justice, a school that involves parents were all items that parents discussed yet when deciding if a school was "good," they so often went back to test scores.

The final question that this work raises is, what exactly do we owe to each other as a community in the construction of our student bodies? Will we ultimately decide that those with privilege will be allowed to make choices that undermine a public good, or will we instead hope for solutions that recognize more deeply the interdependence
of all of us? Can we shift the conversation away from individualism and towards community? And what will it mean for schools and our country if we do not begin to address the increasing segregation and stratification of our schools and communities?
Appendices

Appendix A: JCPS Student Assignment Plan Application for Cluster One

Appendix B: JCPS Application Instructions

Appendix C: JCPS Choices Cover

Appendix D: JCPS Showcase of Schools Guide

Appendix E: JCPS Cluster Map

Appendix F: Brandeis Math Science Technology Magnet Application
Appendix A: JCPS Student Assignment Plan Application

2011-12
Jefferson County Public Schools
Elementary Student Assignment Application
Please print. Press hard. Writing must be visible on all pages.

Student’s Name:

Occ. Date of Birth: / / I.D. No.: 

Is the student Hispanic/Latino? Yes No

Is the student from one or more of these races? (Check all that apply)

☐ American Indian or Alaska Native ☐ Asian ☐ Black or African-American ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ☐ White

Student’s Address:


Parent’s Home Phone No.: Work Phone No.: Other Phone No.: 

Language Most Frequently Spoken at Home: Language Most Frequently Spoken by Child at Home: Language Spoken by Parent to Child: Language Spoken First by Child: Child’s Birth Country: 

Current School: Resides School: 

List your other children and the school they currently attend:
Child’s Name: 2010-11 Grade: School: 2010-11 Grade: School: 

For application to Cluster 1, complete Section I.

Select 2 choices in Area A and 2 choices in Area B. Make sure you have rank-ordered your choices as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th.

Cluster 1

Area A

Dixie
Eisenhower
Greenwood
Gutermuth

Area B

Kerrick
Sanders
Shadette
Watson Lane

The district cannot guarantee placement in a specific school. Therefore, we strongly urge you to carefully consider your second, third, and fourth choices so that we can try to accommodate your child’s needs and interests.

To apply for an optional/magnet program/school, complete Section II.

Submitting an additional application will void the previous application.

Please read Section II of the Parent Instructions, and write your first- and second-choice School Codes/Program Codes below.

A student is included in the random-draw list for a Traditional Program/School or the Brown School only if the program/school is indicated as the student’s first choice. Submitting an application does not guarantee placement in a program/school.

To ensure placement in a cluster, also complete Section II.

Application Deadline: March 1, 2011

First Choice / / (School Code/Program Code)

Second Choice / / (School Code/Program Code)

It is your responsibility to mail the pink copy of this application to:

Optional, Magnet, and Advance Programs Office, Jefferson County Public Schools, P.O. Box 34020, Louisville, KY 40232-4020

Traditional School assignments are based on home address. For the Traditional Program/Schools, no preference is given to siblings.

The following information is requested for application to the Traditional Program/Schools:

Does the applicant have a twin? Circle: Yes No Is the twin applying to the same school? Circle: Yes No

Twin’s Name:

Falsifying information to gain entrance into a school will void your child’s eligibility to attend that school.

Parent/Guardian’s Signature: Date:


Jefferson County Public Schools
Shaping the Future

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer Offering Equal Educational Opportunities.
Appendix B: JCPS Application Instructions

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Instructions for Completing the 2011-12 Elementary School Application

Please be prepared to present proof of address.

Please note: Children must be 5 years old on or before October 1, 2011, to be eligible for kindergarten for the 2011-12 school year.

If your form is preprinted, please read all of the information, make any necessary corrections, and proceed to Section I. If your form is not preprinted, follow these steps:

1. Read the directions for each section carefully.
2. Press firmly. Writing must be visible on all three copies.
3. Print all student information at the top of the application. You do not need to complete the student identification (ID) number information. (Use home address only.)
4. Current School: Write the name of the school your child currently attends.
5. Resides (Local) School: Write the name of the residence school based on your home address. To verify, call Demographics at 485-3050.

6. Circle the level or grade the student will be in during the 2011-12 school year.
7. List your other children and the schools they attend.
8. To request a school outside the residence cluster (e.g., for child-care purposes), you must complete this application and then apply for a hardship transfer on or after May 2, 2011.

SECTION I

This section is for application to a cluster school. Please note that you must apply for your child to attend a school within your assigned cluster. Students are assigned to a cluster based on their home address. The district cannot guarantee placement in a specific school. So that we can try to accommodate your interests, it is important that you give us two choices in Area A and two choices in Area B and that they are rank-ordered 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. Students are assigned within the cluster based on school and program capacity, the assignment of the student's siblings, parental preference, and the district's diversity guideline.

If selected schools are not available, the student will be assigned to a school within the cluster. Return the white and yellow copies of the completed application to the residence school or to the school your child currently attends.

If you move to a new cluster prior to the beginning of school, you will need to complete another application for your new cluster.

SECTION II (Optional)

Help Line: 485-3323

You may apply for a first- and second-choice optional/magnet program/school. The optional/magnet school and program codes are listed on the reverse side of this document.

1. To ensure placement in a Jefferson County public school, fill out Section I in addition to Section II.
2. To apply for an optional/magnet program/school, complete Section II.
3. Write the school code/program code of your first-choice optional/magnet program/school.
4. If you would like to apply to your second-choice optional/magnet program/school, write the school code/program code of your second choice.
5. If you are applying to a Traditional Program/School, indicate if your child is a twin and if your twins will be applying to the same program.

REMINDER: Falsifying information to gain entrance into an optional/magnet program/school will void your child's eligibility to attend that school. (See optional/magnet programs/schools on the reverse side of this document.)

Notification of School Placement: May 2, 2011
### Elementary Magnet Schools

Transportation is provided for students accepted into a magnet school with the exception of the Brown School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Code</th>
<th>Magnet Program and Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis   (Districtwide)</td>
<td>Mathematics/Science/Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290MGA</td>
<td>2817 W. Kentucky St., 40211 • 485-8214, Fax: 777-7954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown      (Districtwide)</td>
<td>Self-Directed Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185MGA</td>
<td>546 S. 1st St., 40202 • 485-8216, Fax: 485-8741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln    (Districtwide)</td>
<td>Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>520MGA</td>
<td>1030 E. Main St., 40206 • 485-8215, Fax: 485-8142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young      (Districtwide)</td>
<td>Global Institute/International Baccalaureate (punching)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>574MGA</td>
<td>5326 W. Muhammad Ali Blvd., 40212 • 485-8354, Fax: 485-8500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Elementary Traditional Schools

Transportation is provided for students accepted into a Traditional School. The following schools are assigned by address and use the same school code/program code.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Code</th>
<th>Magnet Program and Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audubon Traditional</td>
<td>1051 Hess Ave., 40217 • 485-8255, Fax: 485-8798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter Traditional</td>
<td>3600 Bohme Ave., 40211 • 485-8225, Fax: 485-8584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greathouse/Shroy Traditional</td>
<td>2700 Browns Ln., 40226 • 485-8259, Fax: 485-8768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Elementary Traditional Program Schools

Transportation is provided for students accepted into an optional program in their cluster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and Code</th>
<th>Optional Program and Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breckinridge-Franklin Cluster 6</td>
<td>Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>038MGA</td>
<td>Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cane Run Cluster 1</td>
<td>Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>035MGA</td>
<td>Talent Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coral Ridge Cluster 2</td>
<td>Elementary Redesign/Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>090MGA</td>
<td>Waldorf-Inspired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crums Lane Cluster 1</td>
<td>Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>092MGA</td>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Englehard Cluster 5</td>
<td>Elementary Redesign/Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240MGA</td>
<td>Montessori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frazier Cluster 3</td>
<td>Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>290MGA</td>
<td>Gifted and Talented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairdale Cluster 1</td>
<td>Small School Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>094MGA</td>
<td>Visual and Performing Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Elementary Magnet Program Schools

For districtwide magnet programs, transportation is provided for students who are accepted into the program. For cluster-specific magnet programs, transportation is provided for students who are accepted into the program and who are in the designated cluster.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Clusters Served</th>
<th>Address Phone and Fax</th>
<th>Magnet Program and Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson Districtwide</td>
<td>2800 Aford Ave., 40212 • 485-8215, Fax: 485-8793</td>
<td>Academy for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (A.U. Signature Partnership School) 185MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breckinridge-Franklin Cluster 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>3351 Payne St., 40206 • 485-8215, Fax: 485-8628</td>
<td>Communications 038MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byck Districtwide</td>
<td>2328 Cedar St., 40212 • 485-8223, Fax: 485-8903</td>
<td>Talent Development 243MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cane Run Cluster 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>33211 Payne Rd., 40211 • 485-8223, Fax: 485-8659</td>
<td>Waldorf-Inspired 243MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleridge-Taylor Cluster 5 and 6</td>
<td>1115 W. Chestnut St., 40203 • 485-8223, Fax: 485-8673</td>
<td>Environmental Studies 005MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Districtwide</td>
<td>1401 S. 41st St., 40211 • 485-8235, Fax: 485-8665</td>
<td>Montessori 270MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmith Cluster 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>5302 Goldsmith Ln., 40220 • 485-8258, Fax: 485-8671</td>
<td>International and Cultural Studies and Language 010MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Trail Cluster 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>1115 W. Chestnut St., 40203 • 485-8223, Fax: 485-8673</td>
<td>Indian Trail 270MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Cluster 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>33701 W. Wheatmore Dr., 40215 • 485-8258, Fax: 485-8715</td>
<td>Success for All Accelerated Reading 325MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Districtwide</td>
<td>4525 Varnum Ave., 40211 • 485-8225, Fax: 485-8665</td>
<td>Gifted and Talented 325MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill Creek Cluster 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>2817 W. Kentucky St., 40211 • 485-8231, Fax: 485-8631</td>
<td>Leadership Academy 147MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Clusters 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>3001 Garratt Green Way, 40219 • 485-8315, Fax: 485-8485</td>
<td>Environmental Studies 500MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangeland Cluster 4, 5, and 6</td>
<td>1701 Rangeland Rd., 40219 • 485-8315, Fax: 485-8674</td>
<td>Visual Arts 128MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roosevelt-Perry Districtwide</td>
<td>10601 Magazine St., 40203 • 485-8231, Fax: 585-9289</td>
<td>Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning 028MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherford Cluster 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>5301 W. Southland Blvd., 40214 • 485-8320, Fax: 485-8378</td>
<td>Technology 502MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelby Districtwide</td>
<td>735 Siegel St., 40217 • 485-8322, Fax: 485-8507</td>
<td>Visual Arts 560MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington Cluster 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>5301 W. Southland Blvd., 40214 • 485-8320, Fax: 485-8378</td>
<td>Traditional 610MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheatley Districtwide</td>
<td>1101 S. 17th St., 40210 • 485-8348, Fax: 485-8598</td>
<td>Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning 116MGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheatley Districtwide</td>
<td>1101 S. 17th St., 40210 • 485-8348, Fax: 485-8598</td>
<td>Mathematics/Science/Technology 128MGA</td>
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### Key:
- MCA = Magnet Career Academy
- MST = Math, Science Technology

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Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer Offering Equal Educational Opportunities

11/18, 11/14 Option/Magnet Showcase Directory For 9/12 NH

Shaping the Future

www.jcpsky.net
Appendix E: JCPS Cluster Map
Appendix F: Brandeis Application

Student Selection Process

All students desiring admission to Brandeis must complete the board-approved optional and magnet program application and process. They must adhere to the dates of the application period. Applications turned in after this period has ended will be considered late.

Selection for Brandeis is based on a student's past and present performance and educational support (recommendation) from someone currently working with the student. Therefore, parents must obtain from Brandeis a recommendation form to be completed by the student's current teacher. The individual filling out the form must mail the form back to the school. Recommendation forms will not be accepted from parents. Recommendation forms can be requested by phone, mail, fax, or email and can be picked up in person.

In addition, for a student to be considered in the Brandeis Student Selection, the following items must be sent to Brandeis at 2817 West Kentucky Street, Louisville, KY 40211 between February 1 and March 17, 2011:

If your child is entering kindergarten, we need his or her preschool teacher to fill out the front and back portion of the kindergarten recommendation form and include a written response in the comment section. The preschool/Head Start teacher might prefer to write a separate letter citing the child's academic and social strengths. If the child does not attend a preschool, please ask an adult who has had contact with the child over a period of time (e.g., care provider/babysitter; parent of playmate; instructor in sports, dance, religious school; or family member) to fill out the recommendation form and include specific comments.

If your child is entering first grade, we need a copy of his or her kindergarten report cards and current-level report cards to date. The first-grade recommendation form needs to be filled out by the child's current teacher, including information written in the comment section.

If your child is entering grades two through five, we need copies of his or her report cards for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, the recommendation form, two student work samples in either math or science, and a copy of a writing piece, such as a personal narrative, memoir, short story, or informational piece.

The deadline for receiving documentation is March 17. If this falls on a weekend, the next school day becomes the deadline.

School Process

- All documentation will be compiled in individual student folders.
- The secretary will compare the individual toders to the district list of students who have applied to the school through the Optional, Magnet, and Advance Programs Office.

- If a folder is present and the name does not appear on the master list, we will contact the Optional, Magnet, and Advance Programs Office and the parent to determine if the process was completed.

- Once applicants are verified, their folders will be reviewed and scored by a team consisting of teachers, administrators, the attendance clerk, the Family Resource Center (FRC) coordinator, and the school secretary.

The maximum number of points that applicants may receive on the recommendation form are as follows:

Kindergarten ........................................... 52 points
First Grade ........................................... 84 points
Second and Third Grades ......................... 56 points
Fourth and Fifth Grades .......................... 36 points

(See samples of recommendation forms attached.)

Additional points are assigned as follows:

Kindergarten
2 points—Recommendation form completed and turned in on time
1 point—Application turned in to the Optional, Magnet, and Advance Programs Office during the appropriate window
2 points—Took school tour, attended an open-house, and/or attended the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Showcase of Schools

Grades One Through Five
The above with the addition of:
3 points—Submitted appropriate documentation (report cards and work samples)
2 points—Completed the essay

Scoring
The points will be averaged. Starting from the highest score, openings in each grade level will be filled. In addition, we will maintain a waiting list of no more than 50 students for kindergarten, 10 students for first grade, and 5 students for grades two through five.

Letters will be mailed to parents by April 1 to notify them whether their child has been accepted, is on a waiting list, or has been declined by Brandeis. If a student is declined, one of the following reasons will be noted:

- Declined due to lack of space (Student capacity for the student's grade level has been reached.)
- Declined due to an incomplete application

If a child is declined, parents will be encouraged to reapply for the next school year.
Brandeis Elementary
Official Mathematics/Science/Technology Magnet School
Recommendation Form for Students Entering Kindergarten

Each applicant must submit one recommendation form from a teacher, principal, or counselor. Forward this item to Theresa Stubble, Secretaries, Brandeis Elementary School, 2817 West Kentucky Street, Louisville, KY 40211.

Please print.

Grade for the 2010-11 school year:__________________________
Name of Student:__________________________ Birthdate:__________________________
Race:__________________________ Sex:__________________________
Parent's/Guardian's Name:__________________________
Address:__________________________ Zip Code:__________________________
Telephonenumber:__________________________
Current School:__________________________ Current Grade:__________________________
Program: Regular ______ Exceptional Child Education (ECE) ______

Current School
Address:__________________________
City/State:__________________________ Zip Code:__________________________

Does this child have a sibling who now attends Brandeis?
Yes ______ No ______
Name of Sibling:__________________________

To what extent does this student exhibit the following behaviors? (Using the following descriptions, circle the appropriate number.)

1—Never, 2—Sometimes, 3—Most of the time, 4—Always

1. Student recognizes his or her written name.
2. Student identifies beginning and ending sounds in a spoken word.
3. Student can do simple adding and subtracting.
4. Student can tell sequences of events.
5. Student can distinguish between real and imaginary.
6. Student can identify shapes.
7. Student can associate numbers with objects (0–10).
8. Student knows his or her birthday, telephone number, and address.
9. Student is able to listen to a story and recall details.
10. Student can demonstrate directional movement (left/right, top/bottom).
11. Student can count to 50.
12. Student recognizes placement of first- through fifth-grade positions.
13. Student makes observations by using senses.
1. Do you believe this applicant would thrive in the Mathematics/Science/Technology (MST) Magnet Program? Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How would you describe this applicant's work ethic and ability to cooperate with others?

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Does this applicant have any special talents/traits/abilities that would set him or her apart from others who are applying to our program? If so, please explain.

________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

I recommend this student: ______ with reservation.
(Please explain.) ____________________________________________________________

________ without reservation.

________ with great enthusiasm.

Signature:__________________________

Date:______________________________

In what capacity are you familiar with the applicant?___________________________

Please indicate a telephone number and the hours you can be reached for consultation if needed:__________________________________________________________
Preschool Teacher/Caregiver:

Circle the items that the applicant is able to **consistently** identify. This can be accomplished using kid-friendly activities, such as flashcards and games.

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Brandeis Elementary
Official Mathematics/Science/Technology Magnet School
Recommendation Form for Students Entering First Grade

Each applicant must submit one recommendation form from a teacher, principal, or counselor. Forward this item to Theresa Stuble, Secretary, Brandeis Elementary School, 2917 West Kentucky Street, Louisville, KY 40211.

Please print.

Grade for the 2010-11 school year: _____________________________ Birthday: ________________

Name of Student: _____________________________ Race: ________________ Sex: ________________

Parent/Guardian's Name: ____________________________________________ Zip Code: ________________

Address: __________________________________________________________ Telephone Number: _____________________________

Current School: _____________________________________________________ Current Grade: ________________

Program: Advance Program (AP) ________________ Regular ________________ Exceptional Child Education (ECE) ________________

Current School
Address: __________________________________________________________ Zip Code: ________________

City/State: ________________________________________________________

Does this child have a sibling who now attends Brandeis?

Yes _____ No ______

Name of Sibling: ___________________________________________________

To what extent does this student exhibit the following behaviors? (Using the following descriptions, circle the appropriate number.)

1—Never, 2—Sometimes, 3—Most of the time, 4—Always

1. Student can write his or her first and last names correctly. 1 2 3 4
2. Student demonstrates an understanding of rhyming words. 1 2 3 4
3. Student demonstrates book-handling skills (cover, title, print contains message, etc.). 1 2 3 4
4. Student chooses topics for drawing/writing. 1 2 3 4
5. Student writes for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, to tell a story). 1 2 3 4
6. Student supports ideas with drawings and/or words. 1 2 3 4
7. Student uses letters to represent words in writing. 1 2 3 4
8. Student uses a few sight words in writing. 1 2 3 4
9. Student uses letters and/or a few words to resemble a sentence. 1 2 3 4
10. Student uses spaces between words. 1 2 3 4
11. Student forms letters, shapes, and numbers correctly. 1 2 3 4
12. Student writes numerals 0 to 10 in order correctly. 1 2 3 4
13. Student can classify/sort objects into sets. 1 2 3 4
14. Student associates numerals with objects (11 to 20). 1 2 3 4
15. Student can repeat a given pattern using shapes/objects. 1 2 3 4
16. Student identifies/knows the value of a penny, nickel, and dime. 1 2 3 4
17. Student can perform simple addition using objects. 1 2 3 4
18. Student can tell time on the hour. 1 2 3 4
19. Student can count to 100. 1 2 3 4
20. Student can perform simple subtraction using objects. 1 2 3 4
21. Student understands more, less, and same as. 1 2 3 4
22. Student understands a simple inquiry investigation. 1 2 3 4
23. Student knows that maps, globes, and atlases show the location of places. 1 2 3 4
24. Student can distinguish between the past and present. 1 2 3 4

1. Do you believe this applicant would thrive in the Mathematics/Science/Technology (MST) Magnet Program? Why or why not?

2. How would you describe this applicant's work ethic and ability to cooperate with others?

3. Does this applicant have any special talents or abilities that would set him or her apart from others who are applying to our program? If so, please explain.

Attendance: Days present ______ Days absent ______
I recommend this student: ______ with reservation.
(Please explain.)

______ without reservation.
______ with great enthusiasm.

In what capacity are you familiar with the applicant?

Please indicate a telephone number and the hours you can be reached for consultation if needed:

Teacher's Signature: __________________________ Date: __________

In what capacity do you know this student?
Brandeis Elementary
Official Mathematics/Science/Technology Magnet School
Recommendation Form for Students Entering Grades Two and Three

Each applicant must submit one recommendation form from a teacher, principal, or counselor. Forward this item to Theresa Stauble, Secretary, Brandeis Elementary School, 2917 West Kentucky Street, Louisville, KY 40211.

Please print.

Grade for the 2010-11 school year:__________________________

Name of Student: ____________________________ Birthdate: __________

Race: ____________________ Sex: ______________

Parent's/Guardian's Name: ____________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________

Zip Code: __________

Telephone Number: _________________________________________________

Current School: ____________________________ Current Grade: __________

Program: Adverse Program (AP) ______ Regular ______ Exceptional Child Education (ECIE) ______

Current School
Address: ___________________________________________________________

City/State: _________________________________________________________

Zip Code: __________

Does this child have a sibling who now attends Brandeis?

Yes ______ No ______

Name of Sibling: ____________________________________________________

To what extent does this student exhibit the following behaviors? (Using the following descriptions, circle the appropriate number.)

1—Never, 2—Sometimes, 3—Most of the time, 4—Always

1. Student reads left to right, top to bottom, and with one-to-one matching. 1 2 3 4

2. Student uses a variety of strategies (uses prior knowledge, predicts, draws conclusions, rewrites, summarizes, and infers) to comprehend text. 1 2 3 4

3. Student reads fluently and self-corrects when the text does not make sense. 1 2 3 4

4. Student connects reading to personal experiences, other texts, and real-world issues. 1 2 3 4

5. Student narrows topic (writing). 1 2 3 4

6. Students focuses on a purpose for an audience. 1 2 3 4

7. Student uses voice in writing (communicates the writer's personality and tone). 1 2 3 4

8. Student supports ideas with specific details. 1 2 3 4

9. Student can write complete sentences. 1 2 3 4

10. Student makes observations of materials by using all five senses and can recognize when change occurs. 1 2 3 4

11
11. Student demonstrates the ability to sort or group materials based on their similarities and differences (e.g., states of matter, types of motion, earth materials, living organisms and their environment).  

1 2 3 4

12. Student identifies own rights and responsibilities in real-life situations.  

1 2 3 4

13. Student knows basic addition/subtraction facts.  

1 2 3 4

14. Student can solve addition/subtraction problems.  

1 2 3 4

Does this student have any special talents/skills/interests? Please describe.

1. Do you believe this applicant would thrive in the Mathematics/Science/Technology (MST) Magnet Program? Why or why not?

2. How would you describe this applicant's work ethic and ability to cooperate with others?

3. Does this applicant have any special talents/skills/abilities that would set him or her apart from others who are applying to our program? If so, please explain.

Attendance: Days present ______ Days absent ______

I recommend this student: ______ with reservation.

(Please explain.) ______ without reservation.

______ with great enthusiasm.

In what capacity are you familiar with the applicant?

Please indicate a telephone number and the hours you can be reached for consultation if needed:

Teacher's Signature: _______________ Date: _______________

In what capacity do you know this student?
Brandeis Elementary
Mathematics/Science/Technology Magnet School Application Essay

Writing Assessment
(No more than 250 words)

Please complete the following statement:
I would like to be a part of the Mathematics/Science/Technology (MST) Program at Brandeis because:
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