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Vassar College

Friends in High Places: Competing Ideologies at an Independent Quaker School

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

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Friends in High Places: Competing Ideologies at an Independent Quaker School

Drawing on interviews with seven faculty members and administrators in January 2019, this thesis investigates the tension between elite prep school culture and Quaker ideology at a Philadelphia-area independent Friends school, Friends' Central School. While Quaker schools tout simplicity and equality, by operating as expensive private schools that cater to elite families, these institutions are at risk of reinforcing the very values that Quaker doctrines are intended to counter. While this tension has been a concern of Quaker scholars and educators through the twentieth and twenty-first century, there is minimal scholarship on this topic. This thesis finds that, aware of its function of preparing students to hold power, Friends' Central instills in students a unique Quaker ethos to carry with them into future leadership positions. The school relies on the very structures that socialize students to power—curriculum and extracurricular activities—to imbue in them a distinctly Quaker way to act, think, and feel. As asserted in its vision statement, Friends' Central aims to “peacefully transform the world,” and they do so by cultivating students to expect and hold power with respect for humanity and a default of peace.

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Throughout the history of independent Friends¹ schools in the United States, Quaker scholars and educators have questioned the ability of these institutions to function in contemporary society, seeing as their very ideology contrasts with the concept of private education. Scholar of education Ari Betof (2011) states pointedly, “a fundamental tension exists for Friends schools as organizations that offer a premium service at a premium price rooted in a set of core values that rebuke luxury” (p. 113). As independent schools which by definition receive no government funding, Friends schools necessarily require a costly admissions fee, along with generous donations, to keep their doors open. Many Friends schools are not only independent but also high achieving; they are in practice very similar to secular elite private schools. High-achieving private schools, also referred to as college-preparatory schools, or prep schools, have functioned to cultivate the elite in American society, unifying and socializing the children of the upper class to fill their parents’ shoes. However, the financial and social reality of private school goes in direct contrast to the very core of Friends’ education, which promotes not only simplicity, as Betof alludes to, but equality. At the center of this tension stand the faculty, staff, administrators, students, and parents at the over 70 independent Quaker schools in the United States. This thesis asks the following question: How do those in Quaker schools understand, contend with, and resolve this tension?

To answer this question, this thesis draws on the relevant scholarship on elite private schools and Quaker education, in conjunction with interview data from seven teachers and administrators from a Philadelphia-area Friends school, Friends’ Central School. Despite the fact that Quaker schools ideologically reject what elite schools stand for, in practice, Friends’ Central is often indistinguishable from peer prep schools. By nature of being a prep school, school

¹ Quakerism, also known as the Religious Society of Friends, is a protestant sect of Christianity, founded in England in the mid-seventeenth century. Followers of the religion are referred to interchangeably as Quakers and Friends.

structures such as the curriculum, extracurriculars, and admittance to elite colleges and universities socialize Friends' Central students to have and expect power. However, what sets Friends' Central apart from peer prep schools is that the school imbues in future leaders a Quaker consciousness that centers on honoring others' humanity. Moreover, Friends' Central School instills its unique ethos in students through the very school structures that prepare them for power.

CONFLICTING IDEAS ABOUT THE FUNCTION OF EDUCATION

Since the arrival of British colonizers in North America in the seventeenth century, the proper education of children has been a major societal concern. Although schools were established in the colonies as early as 1635, education in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was primarily the responsibility of the family and the church. Even through the nineteenth century, apprenticeship, not formal schooling, was the primary form of professional training (Collins 1979:5). It was not until the mid-twentieth century that secondary schooling, and higher education thereafter, became a widespread norm (Collins 1979:5).

Particularly in the past fifty years, there has been a public outcry over the state of schooling in the United States that has prompted the emergence of conflicting ideologies for reform. Historian of education David Labaree (1997) summarizes, "schools have abandoned academic standards...schools are disorderly places that breed social disorder...schools no longer provide a reliable way for people to get ahead, and schools reinforce social inequality in American society" (p. 40). From parents and educators to politicians and journalists, there has been a widespread focus on the failings of schools to fulfill their varied social functions. Out of this concern comes an articulation of the varied and conflicting goals of education. Labaree

(1997) identifies three distinct goals that have arisen in the pursuit of education reform: democratic equality in which all students have equal access to education and schools teach children to be informed voters, social efficiency in which education is a public good that trains workers to fill necessary roles in society, and social mobility in which education prepares individuals to be competitive and get ahead in the market.

Each of these goals invokes not only a specific educational ideology, but also school policies and practices that contradict one another. For example, schools that promote democratic equality emphasize equal access to all levels of schooling, while a focus on social efficiency shifts curriculum from traditional subjects to vocational training. Labaree (1997) poses the question: “How can schools realistically be expected to promote all of these goals at the same time and remain coherent and effective?” (p. 43). The short answer is, they cannot. Schooling in the United States exists at the intersection of these conflicting goals, and in each historical moment, one goal takes precedence over the others. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Labaree (1997) identifies social mobility as the primary goal of the U.S. education system. It is this aim that has led to the growing privatization of education.

Privatization of Education

Though education has been increasingly privatized since the mid-twentieth century as demonstrated by the rise in school choice programs, private schooling² has a well-established history in the United States. Despite this fact, scholars have noted that independent schools have been understudied in the literature on education in the United States (Cookson and Persell 1985; James and Levin 1988). The very notion of a private school, especially an elite school, goes

² For the most part, scholars of education use the terms private, nonpublic, and independent schools interchangeably (Kraushaar 1972).

against the American ideal of school as the great equalizer—the goal Labaree (1997) terms democratic equality (Cookson and Persell 1985:15). By their very definition, nonpublic schools do not purport to offer educational opportunity to all. Instead, philosopher Otto Kraushaar (1972) suggests, “the chief rationale of the independent school is to offer a ‘better’ education than that available in the public school” (p. 7). Private schools are thought to offer not only more rigorous academics but also stronger student-teacher relationships and exceptional extracurricular opportunities (Kraushaar 1972:7). While private schools tout individualized, first-class education, they are also widely known for their prestige and exclusivity. Kraushaar (1972) elaborates,

The numerically small but educationally important group of independent schools is sought after chiefly for their academic superiority, though the high degree of student selectivity practiced by these schools, associated usually with high prestige and social status as well as family tradition, often exerts a significant influence on parental choice (p. 7).

Sociologists Peter Cookson and Caroline Hodges Persell (1985) elaborate that, in fact, “there is nothing intrinsic to private education that makes it superior to public education” (p. 22); instead, being accepted to private school is like being accepted to a social club.

Among scholars who study private schools in the United States, the primary topics of investigation have been related to elitism in independent schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Khan 2010), school stratification and achievement inequality (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore 1982) and school choice (Kraushaar 1972). The private school sector encompasses religious and non-religious schools, as well as day and boarding schools. Although a majority of the private schools in the United States are operated by religious organizations, much of the significant sociological study on independent schools has focused on secular elite private schools and their role in social stratification (Baltzell 1958; Domhoff 1967; Mills 1956). Additionally, much of the

scholarship on these secular elite schools focuses on boarding schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Khan 2010), which were especially common choices for training boys of elite families in the mid-twentieth century (Mills 1956). With the expanding study of American elites in the 1950s, scholars quickly turned to elite private schools as a key component of the reproduction of the upper class.

In the twentieth century, the socialization of children shifted from the being the responsibility of the family to being a task of schools, which reinforced the expectation that children of elite families attend prep schools. Attending prep school was a unifying experience and students built strong social networks among their classmates; elite schools produced a class of future leaders of industry that was cohesive. While prep schools brought together future elites, they also served to distinguish this class from the rest of society (Baltzell 1958; Mills 1956). Prep schools prepare students to hold power by creating opportunities for student leadership, and they legitimize that power through excellence in both academics and athletics (Cookson and Persell 1985). Beyond curriculum and extra-curriculars, Cookson and Persell (1985) find that prep schools are sites of contradiction, and it is this contradiction itself that is the prep rite of passage.

PREP SCHOOL CONTRADICTIONS

In their seminal study of elite boarding schools, Cookson and Persell (1985) argue that a defining characteristic of prep schools is that they are sites of contradiction. These schools are situated within a system that, as previously stated, is itself characterized by the conflicting ideologies of democratic education, social efficiency, and social mobility (Labaree 1997). Cookson and Persell (1985) build on this line of argument to unpack the specific tensions at play

in elite prep schools. Although distinct from the large-scale competing goals of education, the actors involved—namely, students, school leadership, and parents—face the same task of contending with contradiction. Cookson and Persell (1985) elaborate,

The struggle to reconcile right and might, however, is only one of many paradoxes that characterize the prep school world. We wondered why it is that parents who want ‘broaden’ their children’s outlooks enroll them in schools where the outlook seldom stretches beyond the school’s boundaries ... It took us some time to realize that many of the paradoxes about the schools were more apparent than real and that what appeared to be contradictory was actually complementary. Part of the preparation for power is learning to live in a world of seeming contradictions. By learning to reconcile the difference between what the schools teach and what is learned, students discover that power and pain are inseparable and that to a large degree the price of privilege is the loss of autonomy and individuality. (P. 19)

Prep schools are not only rife with paradoxes, but Cookson and Persell (1985) assert that it is these contradictions themselves that define the schools. Moreover, while these tensions seem irresolvable, in fact, reconciling the contradictions is in itself a way in which young people are formulated to join the ranks of the elite. It is not, Cookson and Persell (1985) argue, prep school itself that is a rite of passage of the elite (Mills 1956), but specifically the work of reckoning with paradoxes that prepares students to be in power.

Boarding school students are pressured from three different directions, in a triangle of tension. Families are anxious that their children succeed, which often runs counter to the school’s public insistence on ‘morality,’ which is usually in direct opposition to the student culture’s message of eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you graduate. These competing values create a psychic gauntlet through which the elite student must pass—the prep rite of passage. The difference between what is taught and what is learned is what creates the dynamic tension that permeates the campuses of the most elite schools. (Cookson and Persell 1985:20)

At elite boarding schools, students contend with three distinct and conflicting goals from their parents, the school, and their peers. They must learn to navigate an insular environment in which these ideologies come into conflict. This tension, though not widely written about, seems to be at play in a majority of private educational institutions, especially those known for academic rigor.

Parents often think of schooling in terms of Labaree's (1997) social mobility mechanism; sending one's child to a "good school" can guarantee the child an economically successful future. In fact, a Friends' Central administrator articulated that same sentiment about his parents' decision to send him to private school: "My mom was like this is going to be a great education. The whole thing with opportunities. Sacrifices to cover the cost." Prep school serves as an avenue of social mobility, granting opportunities for students to hold leadership positions in society in the future. The school, on the other hand, has a moralizing impulse, as described in school mission statements and admissions packets. Finally, the students have their own agenda having more to do with peer approval than academic and moral education. Prep school students must navigate these paradoxes, a process which prepares them for the contradictory world of the elites that they are being groomed to enter into.

The prep school as a site of contradiction takes on a slightly different face when looking at religious schools. Dissatisfied with the Protestant-laced public schools, in the late-nineteenth century, Catholics began founding private schools to provide young Catholics with not only intellectual, but also moral teaching. Soon after, many Protestant sects and Orthodox Jewish leaders, themselves unhappy with the state of the public schools, established their own private religious schools to educate their children. Similarly, Quaker communities in North America founded schools to facilitate the moral and intellectual training of their children.

The key tension in Quaker schools is very similar to that in prep schools: the parties involved have competing goals for schooling. While originally founded to educate children to live in an idealized Quaker society, Friends schools quickly transformed to be populated by wealthy families who could afford to send their children to private schools. The very notion of an exclusive private school not only contradicts the overarching American ideal of democratic

education, but also goes against the core values of Quakerism. While elite schools promote distinction and luxury, Quakers reject indulgence. Thus, throughout the twentieth century and twenty-first century, Quaker scholars and educators have raised the following concern: Are Friends schools catering to elite families at the cost of providing students with a genuinely Quaker education? The Coordinator of Sexuality Education at Friends' Central School stated,

I think that when you're here a long time, and you see how the sausage is made, I think you see more of the ... I don't know if it's the reality but more of the challenge around that. You get past the surface a little bit, and you see that there are plenty of ways that we're not as peaceful as we ought to be, and not as equitable as we ought to be. And not as communal as we ought to be.

Twenty-first century Friends schools do not, perhaps, carry out the Quaker testimonies as much as they ought to. However, as Cookson and Persell (1985) assert that it is contradiction itself that characterizes prep schools, independent Quaker schools are also defined by this tension between being peaceful, being equitable, being communal, and competing for students with other private schools. Scholar of education Sarah McMenamin Kim (2011) found that, at one Philadelphia Friends school, faculty and staff used the language of “leaning into discomfort,” meaning embracing the tension (p. 75). The experience of working at and attending a Quaker school is characterized by grappling with this core tension.

The same contradictions described by Cookson and Persell (1985) persist at Quaker schools, as a subset of independent schools. Moreover, there seems to be a paradox in Quaker educational ideology and private school culture—itsself rife with contradiction, as discussed previously. It is at this intersection of the tensions that independent Quaker schools face in the twenty-first century that this thesis is located.

THE QUAKER CITY

Philadelphia is a natural focus for this study both for the concentration of Quakers and Quaker schools in and around the city and because it is one of the old urban centers where American elites were based. While the Quaker roots are not so evident in twenty-first century Philadelphia, the city was founded by Friends. The Quaker tradition continue to be present in Philadelphia through Friends institutions, including schools. Thus, Philadelphia is a site that—at least in a small way—embodies Quaker history and Quaker ethos. On the other hand, Philadelphia is and has been home to a thriving elite class. Sociologist E. Digby Baltzell (1958) brought light to Philadelphia’s identity as home to a business aristocracy in the mid-twentieth century. Originally a majority Quaker colony, by 1970, less than one fourth of the city’s inhabitants were Quaker; Philadelphia was dominated by wealthy families (Baltzell 1958:238). Baltzell (1958) asserts that Philadelphia serves as a valuable case study to understand metropolitan class stratification. Thus, Philadelphia has encompassed both Quaker and elite domination; the moral frameworks of each live on in the city and in the local private Quaker schools.

According to the Friends Council on Education, in 2010 there were over 70 independent Quaker primary and secondary schools in the United States. Of these schools, about half are located in Pennsylvania and a majority are day schools. Because of the historically high concentration of Quakers in the Philadelphia area, there are a number of K-12 Friends schools in and around Philadelphia, including the first American Quaker school, William Penn Charter School. The Philadelphia Friends schools are located both in the city and in the suburbs outside the city. One school, Friends’ Central School, sits right on the line between city and suburbs.

From this unique location, Friends' Central draws students from both Philadelphia and the affluent suburban Main Line.³

For this study, I have chosen Friends' Central School as a case study to illustrate the tension of competing educational philosophies in contemporary independent Quaker secondary schools. No one school encompasses the wide variety of theories and practices of Friends schools across the country. However, the location of Friends' Central, as well as its size makes it somewhat representative of Quaker schools. The location of the school is particularly relevant in this study because Friends' Central is the only nursery-12 Quaker school on the Main Line, which has traditionally been a bastion of old money. Additionally, as the literature on elite private school focuses on secondary schools, this study, too, looks exclusively at a high school.⁴ Of the Friends schools that include high school, seven are just secondary and 23 are preK-12 (Friends Council on Education 2017). Thus, by being a nursery-12 school, Friends' Central is also representative of Quaker high schools. However, I recognize that one of the great limitations of this study is that it is not generalizable to all Quaker schools. Nevertheless, I believe, and will illustrate throughout this thesis that studying Friends' Central is valuable in order to discover and describe the tensions at play in an independent Quaker school.

METHODOLOGY

In a 1968 essay, British sociologist Ian Weinberg (1968) cautions researchers about the difficulty of studying elite secondary schools, primarily due to a lack of access to the schools. He encourages scholars to find a sponsor with access to the school who may mitigate initial hostility

³ The Main Line is a historically designated region in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia, known for being populated by affluent families.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, mentions of Friends' Central School in the text refer only to the Upper School, grades 9-12, as this thesis is solely concerned with secondary school.

and suspicion toward the researcher, who is both not an in-group member and may be critical of the institution (Weinberg 1968:144). The other key methodological problem Weinberg (1968) highlights is the issue of collecting data on student subcultures. He cautions researchers with the following insight: “Simply stated, sociologists and their graduate students are adults while the subjects of their research are either children or adolescents undergoing complex developmental changes” (Weinberg 1968:150). In the field of sociology of education, there is inherently a disconnect between students and researchers due to the adults’ limited ability to understand young people.

Although Weinberg’s view of guarded institutions has been the typical assumption by social scientists, many researchers in the past fifty years have gained access to elite prep schools (Bryans 2000; Cookson and Persell 1985; Franek 2007; Hays 1994; Khan 2010; Kim 2011). Cookson and Persell (1985) note, “We pulled no strings, nor did we need to. After being forewarned by colleagues, ‘You’ll never get into those schools,’ the graciousness of our reception was gratifying and a little perplexing” (p. 6). They go on to hypothesize that schools opened their doors in hopes that the study would highlight the merits of prep schools, or more optimistically, that the researchers “demonstrated a serious approach to the subject,” (Cookson and Persell 1985:6-7). As elite schools place a high value on academic rigor and prestige, it makes sense that they would welcome and respect prominent scholars.

Similarly to Cookson and Persell (1985) and other recent scholars (see Hays 1994), I did not face many of the methodological challenges that social scientists face when studying elites and their schools; I was welcomed with an open door. However, unlike the previously referenced scholars, I have in-group status at the school as a young alumna and sister of a current Upper

School⁵ student. When I initially contacted the assistant principal, he quickly agreed to be interviewed and encouraged me to contact others who I may want to interview directly. Each of the seven teachers and administrators I contacted agreed to be interviewed and expressed excitement to participate. While lacking Cookson and Persell's (1985) "ins" of being prominent scholars with the potential to publish widely about the schools, I was welcomed to Friends' Central on account of my affiliation with the community. I acknowledge that as a white woman from an upper middle-class family, which is the type of student that Friends' Central has traditionally catered to, I am privileged as an insider. Because of my identity and status as an alumna, I was granted access to Friends' Central in a manner that another researcher may not have gained.

By the design of the investigation, I did not face methodological barriers to understanding student subculture; if anything, I had the opposite problem as a young adult and former student interviewing seasoned faculty and administrators. However, as I conducted interviews, not ethnography, concerns about breaking into and understanding the faculty culture are not particularly relevant.

While my position as an alumna of Friends' Central School allowed me to easily be welcomed back as a researcher, it also inherently inhibited my ability to view the school's values and practices objectively. The question of objectivity has plagued sociologists since the founding of the discipline. Can and should sociologists be objective in their study? My own thinking on objectivity is inspired by that of sociologist Kristin Luker (2008). She suggests that being objective is impossible in the social sciences, yet nonetheless a worthy goal (Luker 2008:6).

⁵ The three branches of Friends' Central are the Lower School (nursery through fifth grade), Middle School (sixth through eighth grade), and the Upper School (ninth through twelfth grade). The Middle and Upper School share a campus in Wynnewood, PA.

Moreover, social scientists must use their position in society to investigate it. She writes, “We are fish studying water, and our very fishiness shapes how we think about it. Not only are our assumptions about the social world themselves socially influenced, but so are our assumptions about the best way to go about investigating the social world” (Luker 2008:31). My position as a member of the in-group at an elite prep school, Friends’ Central School, necessarily informed the way I went about studying and writing about the school.

The research for this thesis consisted of interviews with the following seven teachers and administrators of the Friends’ Central Upper School: the principal, the assistant principal, the Coordinator of Justice and Equity Education, the Quaker Coordinator and Middle and Upper School teacher, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, the physics teacher, and the Sexuality Education Coordinator and English teacher. I chose to privilege the insights of senior teachers and administrators because while students and young teachers come and go, it is the senior faculty that remains constant. Cookson and Persell (1985) write, “Senior faculty in particular are the embodiment of what the schools has been, is, and will be” (p. 85). Besides seniority, the other factors I considered when choosing interviewees were their unique positions and Quaker affiliation. Besides the principal and assistant principal, who were chosen for their leadership positions in the Upper School, I sought out the other five interviewees because they occupy roles that are either uncommon or nonexistent at other prep schools. For example, the physics teacher is also the coordinator of service learning for the Upper School, so she provided a unique insight into that distinctly Quaker school program. The three coordinators, of Quakerism, Justice and Equity Education, and Sexuality Education, also occupy roles unique to Quaker schools, and Friends’ Central, specifically. In terms of personal Quaker affiliation, four out of seven interviewees are Friends. The Quaker Coordinator has been a Friend since she was a teenager.

The Quakerism and Spanish teacher became a Quaker as a young adult. The Coordinator of Justice and Equity Education and the Sexuality Education Coordinator both converted to Quakerism after being exposed to the religion at Friends' Central.

The seven people interviewed in this study are not a representative sample of the faculty and administration of the Friends' Central Upper School; the majority of the faculty and staff are not Quaker, they are not senior members of the faculty, nor do they occupy such unique positions. However, as this thesis seeks to investigate how Friends' Central aligns with and differs from traditional prep schools and Quaker ideals, the perspectives of faculty in positions that are unique to the school—and distinct from peer institutions—are highly valuable.

I conducted interviews with these teachers and administrators the weeks of January 7 and January 14, 2019 in each interviewee's office or classroom. These interviews were semi-structured. I prepared a list of questions prior to the interviews and asked questions that were relevant to the conversation at any given moment during the interview. A full list of questions can be found in the appendix. These questions centered around the school's values and the role of Quakerism, diversity, and student success.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The following chapters aim to unpack and understand the philosophy and school structures and practices at Friends' Central School, recognizing the school's position as both a Quaker institution and a prep school. This introductory chapter presents the tensions at play in schooling in the United States, and specifically contradictions in elite private schools and more specifically, in Quaker prep schools. It is this tension at independent Quaker schools that informs the research question and methodology, also addressed in this chapter. The second chapter

provides an overview of the sociology of elite private schools, institutions which have historically reproduced class cohesion and distinction of those in power in the United States. Chapter three gives historical background on Quaker education and Friends' Central School, specifically. This history serves to illustrate the Quaker educational ideology that is central to Friends' Central's mission and describe how the central tension between prep schools and Quakerism has been understood by Friends through the twentieth century. These first three chapters describe the tensions at play in Quaker prep schools through a historical and sociological lens.

Building on the historical construction and understanding of the inherent tension in Friends school between prep school culture and function and Quaker ideology, chapters four and five seek to understand how this tension is resolved at one independent Quaker school, Friends' Central School. Drawing on interview data, chapter four describes how faculty and staff understand and articulate the unique ethos of Friends' Central, including how they and the school as a whole define student success and how new students are socialized to the school. The interviews suggest that the school consciously and conscientiously seeks to ingrain a Quaker mindset in students, both in terms of how to approach their secondary schooling and how to move through the world post-graduation. Chapter five looks in-depth at two distinct divisions of the Friends' Central Upper School: curriculum and extracurriculars. In previous studies of schooling, including those on elite schools and Quaker schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Hays 1994; Khan 2010), special attention has been paid to these areas to understand how schools transmit knowledge—both academic content and moral teachings—to students. While the curriculum, clubs, and athletics look very similar to those at non-Quaker prep schools, at Friends' Central, faculty and administrators understand these programs to be a vehicle to

teaching students to learn and embody Quaker values. It is clear by looking at the college admittance statistics, the rigor of the academic program, and extracurricular offerings⁶ of the schools that Friends' Central prepares students for enter the elite class. However, what sets Friends' Central apart is that it sends students out into the world with a Quaker conscientiousness. As has been the case, and continues to be the case in Friends schools, faculty are aware that the Quaker mission of the school must constantly be weighed against the social and financial realities of maintaining a prep school. Nonetheless, independent Friends schools are armed with the unique ability to use Quaker religious and moral teachings to transform the hearts and minds of a subset of the future elites.

⁶ The factors listed here are not the only demonstrations of the ways in which Friends' Central mirrors, and also pushes back on, traditional theories and practices of prep schools. Other elements include aesthetics like architecture, student and faculty dress code, and hierarchy and relationships between students, staff, faculty, administrators, school heads, and trustees. While some of these topics did arise in the interviews, it is outside the scope of this study to address them all.

Chapter II

Elite Schooling

Fewer than ten percent of students in the U.S. attend private schools (National Association of Independent Schools n.d.), and yet these institutions continue to be a topic of study for sociologists of education and sociologists of elites. Beginning with the work of C. Wright Mills (1956) in the 1950s, independent schools have traditionally been characterized by scholars as sites of reproduction of the upper class (Baltzell 1958; Domhoff 1967). Prep schools teach students a rigorous curriculum, but also the culture of the privileged class. However, scholars of twenty-first century elite schools point to a shift in independent schools in line with changing conceptions of the elite. Nowadays, these institutions seek out and embrace racial, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity and prepare students to be at ease with difference (Khan 2011). This chapter will first review the twentieth century literature on elite schooling, followed by a description of the limited scholarship on private schools in the twenty-first century.

PRIVATE SCHOOL AS ELITE CLASS REPRODUCTION

C. Wright Mill's (1956) seminal writing on private schools, *The Power Elite*, emphasizes their role in unifying the elite class. His post-war study of elites focuses on the confluence of military, corporate, and political power in the elite upper class in the United States. This class is made up both of old money families and newer, wealthy families. One central piece to Mills' (1956) analysis is that this ruling group, which he deems the "power elite," is unified and primarily homogenous. One of the unifying social processes among elites is the education that they receive at elite private schools.

As a selection and training place of the upper classes, both old and new, the private school is a unifying influence, a force for the nationalization of the upper classes ... The school—rather than the upper-class family—is the most important agency for transmitting the traditions of the upper social class and regulating the admission of new wealth and talent. It is the characterizing point in the upper-class experience.” (Mills 1956:64-65)

In the mid-twentieth century, boys of elite families were expected to, and did attend, boarding schools, and their sisters attended prep schools. These secondary schools served the purpose of academically training youths for elite institutions of higher learning, such as Harvard or Yale for men and Vassar or Bryn Mawr for women. Moreover, Mills (1956) emphasizes that boarding schools prepared young men to enter the most elite social circles at Harvard or Yale through socialization processes that occurred outside of class: in extracurriculars, relationships with faculty, and meal conventions, to name a few. Elite secondary schools provided young men and women with the sociocultural training to enter the class of the power elite.

Formation of Social Networks

Another key function of elite schools in the formation of the upper class was the formation of social networks. Young men and women form friendships and romantic relationships with peers that constitute a network among the children of the elite. This network serves as a form of social capital (Bourdieu 1986) that reinforces and reproduces the domination of the power elite in society. Khan (2012) elaborates, “Because of this common socialization and network participation [at and in elite institutions], people in higher levels of government and business tend to have similar mindsets reinforced by social ties to one another” (p. 365). G. William Domhoff (1967) the inheritor of Mills’ intellectual legacy, reinforced the significance of social networks in the elite class. Both Domhoff (1967) and Mills (1956) attribute the maintenance of the elite class to social institutions, and specifically elite secondary schools and

colleges. Domhoff (1967) adds that private schools serve to integrate a broader spectrum of students into the power elite than do other social institutions such as social clubs and charitable organizations. Firstly, he contends that schools connect students across a broader geography. He writes, “They are the main avenue by which upper-class children from smaller towns become acquainted with their counterparts from all over the country” (Domhoff 1967:16). Not only do students form a social network with those in their city, but the network extends nationally. Secondly, Domhoff (1967) writes that private schools assimilate the brightest minds of the lower classes, few of whom were granted admission to prep schools in the mid-twentieth century, which both serves to benefit the upper class and weaken the working class (p. 16). Private schools trained individual students for power while also creating a unified ruling class.

Differentiation of the Elite

Not only did private schools serve to unify and socialize the next generation of elites in the mid-twentieth century, but in doing so, these schools differentiated the upper echelon from the rest of society. Sociologist E. Digby Baltzell (1958), who wrote around the same time as Mills (1956), emphasized this point in his study of the Philadelphia upper class. He states, “As the public school has become available to all Americans, the private school then becomes the differentiating factor in a social class sense” (Baltzell 1958:296). In large part due to the entrance fee, only families who had money to send their children to private schools, instead of opting for the free public schools, would do so.

Historically, money was not the only barrier to entry to private school. Prior to the 1960s, prep schools only admitted Protestants; Catholics and Jews would not be admitted. These schools also maintained a majority white student, faculty, and trustee population by barring Black

students.⁷ Even after the advent of the “A Better Chance” program in 1963—which provided opportunity for minority children to attend independent schools—prep schools remained predominantly white (Cookson and Persell 1991:219). Scholars of the 1950s and 1960s established the idea that prep schools are institutions that unify the elite class, while differentiating them from the rest of society. Later scholars built off this foundational understanding of elite schools and asked the following: What goes on inside schools that reinforces and reproduces the upper class?

INSIDE THE “BLACK BOX:” HOW DO SCHOOLS REPRODUCE INEQUALITY?

Addressing this question of how elite private schools contribute to social and educational inequality, Cookson and Persell (1985) find that factors including curriculum, school leadership, and extracurricular activities result in a prep rite of passage. This rite of passage, which as previously described, the authors articulate to be characterized by contradiction, results in the production of “class cohesion and class legitimation” (Karen 1986:479). In line with Mills’ (1956) findings from three decades before, Cookson and Persell (1985) find that attending prep school is a unifying experience for graduates who will join the ranks of the power elite. Moreover, by passing through this rite of passage, these elites internalize the idea that their power and social positions are legitimate. While prep schools tout a rigorous academic program, of equal importance is imbuing in students how to dress and act. While some of this socialization happens within the classroom, much of the formation of students occurs outside of class.

⁷ The historical process of private school integration, or lack thereof, was similarly complex to the same debate in public education. No institutional education can be studied without acknowledging the disparity of access between white students and Black students that persists through the twenty first century, and many scholars have written on the topic of private schools and race (Cookson and Persell 1991; Khan 2010:7; Kraushaar 1972; Saporito 2009). However, an in-depth discussion of these themes is outside the scope of this study.

Extracurriculars: Training for “Prep Power”

Like Mills (1956), Cookson and Persell (1985) identify extracurriculars as one of the primary ways in which students are socialized in prep schools. Compared to public and Catholic schools, students at private schools participate in more extracurricular activities (Coleman et al. 1982; Cookson and Persell 1985). These activities include athletics, musical activities like orchestra and chorus, student publications, and student government (Coleman et al. 1982:94). In their investigation into extracurriculars at elite boarding schools, Cookson and Persell (1985) found that these activities offered students another opportunity to develop their “verbal, interpersonal, and leadership skills” (p. 80). Extracurriculars are another space in which students interact with their peers and develop the social skills necessary to operate in elite spaces.

Moreover, prep schools prioritize student leadership. Extracurriculars provide an opportunity for students to take on leadership roles as club presidents or by participating in student government. This need to train students for power stems from both the need for the ruling class to exercise power in dominating business, politics, and society, and also the power to maintain privilege (Cookson and Persell 1985:24). Therefore, student leadership is highly valued in U.S. prep schools as students practice being in positions of authority, and, moreover, feeling legitimate in those positions.

Athletics

Prep schools place great importance on student involvement in a wide variety of extracurriculars, but none so much as sports. Cookson and Persell (1985) assert that much of a school’s pride results from athletic success. They write, “The pressure for athletic success is

intense on many campuses, and a student's, as well as school's, social standing can ride on the narrow margin between victory and defeat" (Cookson and Persell 1985:79). Thus, athletic competition between elite prep schools becomes a stand-in for a ranking among peer private schools. Prep schools make an effort to exclusively compete against other prep schools to avoid fraternization with "townies" (Cookson and Persell 1985:78). By only playing other prep schools, an elite school differentiates itself from public schools, and its students from public school students.

Since the school's reputation relies so heavily on athletics, there is great pressure for student athletes to succeed on the field and court. Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore's (1982), study demonstrates that, in 1980, a higher percentage of students participated in athletics at other private schools than Catholic or public schools, and even more in high-performance private schools (p. 96).⁸ The typical prep school offers a wide variety of athletic offerings: "football, soccer, cross-country, water polo, ice hockey, swimming squash, basketball, wrestling...tennis, golf, baseball, track and lacrosse" as well as field hockey and horseback riding for girls (Cookson and Persell 1985:78-79). Not every prep student participates in athletics; however, in 1980, 84% of sophomores at high-performance private schools did so (Coleman et al. 1982:96). Those who do not participate are nonetheless invested through a whole school concern with athletic competition (Cookson and Persell 1985). Pep rallies are held frequently, and school hallways are often decorated with banners and posters for upcoming games (Cookson and Persell 1985:79). Athletics are also one way in which alumnae/i continue to be involved in their alma mater by attending games and occasionally participating themselves in an alumni game against current students.

⁸ An in-depth explanation of these school categories can be found in Coleman et al. (1982).

Curriculum

The importance of extracurriculars in socializing students for power does not diminish the significance of what goes on inside the classroom. Compared to public schools, prep schools have more courses with specific foci, greater graduation requirements (Coleman et al. 1982), and additional opportunities for experiential learning through volunteering and travel abroad (Cookson and Persell 1985). Cookson and Persell (1985) write that the learning done at prep schools equips students with the knowledge and skills to be a part of the upper class.

The cultural capital that prep school students accumulate in boarding schools is a treasure trove of skills and status symbols that can be used in later life. Armed, as it were, by the classical curriculum, the prep school graduate is prepared to do battle in the marketplace of ideas, competently, if not necessarily brilliantly. (P. 30)

The classical curriculum, while not directly applicable to the jobs students will do in the future, arms students with cultural capital, meaning knowledge that is valued for its social prestige (Bourdieu 1986).

While in European and American society, it has traditionally been the case that social class was linked with educational attainment, sociologist Randall Collins (1979) argues that in the twentieth century, the United States became a credential society: Formal schooling has become more important than vocational training in sociocultural advancement. The primary function of schools is not train students to do a job, but instead to arm them with a credential that is valued in the cultural market (Collins 1979). Cookson and Persell (1985) assert that it is the classical curriculum itself that provides students access to the upper echelon. Latin is not taught in prep schools so that students will all go on to become Latin scholars, but so that they can distinguish themselves from the rest of society and gain entrance to an elite college. Thus, as Labaree (1997) argues, by the turn of the twenty-first century, American society, and thus the

schooling system, had become much more focused on social mobility than egalitarian goals. No longer does schooling prepare students to be citizens nor to carry out specific vocations, but instead, elite private schools afford the opportunity for certain people to ascend the ranks of society.

In the mid-twentieth century, Mills (1956) suggested that elite private secondary schools were institutions maintained by the elite to socialize their children to power. Building off of this theory, sociologists such as Baltzell (1958) and Domhoff (1967) made elite schools a subject of study, and they demonstrated that prep schools unify the upper class through the creation of a social network by repeated encounter and that these intuitions differentiate the elite from the rest of society. Cookson and Persell (1985) went a step beyond previous scholars and asked how prep schools contribute to social inequality. Over 25 years later, Khan (2010) revisited the question of the link between elite schools and inequality.

THE MAKING OF THE NEW ELITE: PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Unlike the world of Mills (1956) and Baltzell (1958), in which prep schools were highly exclusive based on religion, race, and socioeconomic status, in the twenty-first century, Khan (2010) observes that these intuitions are much more open to those who they previously excluded. However, Khan (2010) identifies a contradiction in today's society: "Class has a strong impact on future earnings, but elite institutions are aggressively claiming to be more welcoming than ever to the disadvantaged. We don't have good answers to why these seemingly incongruent observations go together" (p. 39). Despite private schools' new inclusive policies, inequality in the United States has increased. Khan's (2010) explanation centers around the fact that the elites who drive the increasing wealth inequality are not the same elites of the mid-twentieth century.

Accepting that prep schools are, as Mills' (1956) demonstrated over fifty years ago, institutions that cultivate the next generation of elites, Khan's (2010) in-depth study of St. Paul's School, a highly-selective boarding school in New Hampshire, necessarily implicates an explanation of the "new elite." Unlike the elites-in-training at the prep schools in Mills' (1956) day, the new elites are not a homogenous group. He elaborates, "They are not all born into rich families. They are not all white. Their families did not arrive on these shores four centuries ago. They are not all from the Northeast. They do not share a preppy culture; they don't avoid rap music and instead educate themselves in the 'finer' cultural things" (Khan 2010:13). Khan (2010) finds the elite class is no longer unified, homogenous, and cohesive. At the heart of this shift is the change from entitlement to privilege (Khan 2010:14). Instead of touting social connections and exclusive culture, the new elites are much more individualistic: they attribute merit to personal achievement.

This shift in the demographic and mentality of the new elite is mirrored in the social institutions most central to the upper class, namely prep schools. "Part of the way in which institutions like St. Paul's School and the Ivy League tell their story is to look less and less like an exclusive yacht club and more and more like a microcosm of our diverse social world—albeit a microcosm with very particular social rules," describes Khan (2010:14). Just as the new elite are not comprised of, nor portray themselves as, traditional "preppies," nor do the schools that breed them. Instead, prep schools like St. Paul's School welcome a student body that is racially, ethnically, religiously, and somewhat socioeconomically diverse.⁹

⁹ Khan (2010) notes that when schools, and scholars, say "diversity" and "openness," that primarily refers to race. Although elite colleges and universities claim to be making higher education affordable to the average American, Khan (2010) highlights the fact that the middle income at Harvard is the richest 5 percent of the United States (p. 6).

Although elite private schools of the twenty-first century continue to be institutions controlled by the ruling class, their public face is now one of inclusion, not exclusion. Schools admit more students of color and offer financial aid to lower income students. Moreover, the student culture, at least at St. Paul's School, rejects entitlement and instead values individual experience and achievement (Khan 2010). This change in prep schools reflects the new American elite, which as Khan (2010) characterizes it, is a class that embraces the American ideal of individualism and meritocracy while also valuing a contemporary global outlook (p. 14). Thus, instead of socializing student to join the high society of the past, St. Paul's School teaches students three lessons privilege: "Hierarchies are natural and they can be treated like ladders, not ceilings," "Experiences matter," and "Privilege means being at ease, no matter what the context" (Khan 2010:15). The first lesson emphasizes social mobility, the second a meritocracy based on experiences, and the third an openness to knowledge. While distinct from the messages transmitted to students in the mid-twentieth century, schools like St. Paul's School nonetheless prepare students for power. It is significant to note, as well, that while student subculture and admissions policies had changed at St. Paul's School, Khan (2010) found that many facets of the school—the curriculum, athletics, school traditions, relationships between students and faculty—looked very similar to previous decades. Maintaining the traditional features of an elite private school, St. Paul's School has adapted to socializing students into the new elite.

Elite private schools have sought to, and continue to seek to, imbue in students a specific set of values and customs that will inform their way of being in the world. In the 1950s, and through the 1980s, prep schools trained students in the ways of a unified and cohesive upper class. This socialization was reinforced by every aspect of the institution: relationships between students, teachers and administrators, curriculum, extracurriculars, architecture, dress code, etc.

While fundamentally, these prep school offerings have not changed—the architecture remains traditional, athletics a point of pride, and curriculum both classical and cutting edge—the students have changed,¹⁰ as has the elite class they are trained to join. However, the result is still such that prep schools impart a specific set of values in students.

While all private schools transmit a specific set of values to students, sociologist Kim Hays (1994) argues that only a subset of schools are “self-consciously moral” (p. 3). Hays’ (1994) book looks at Quaker and military boarding schools, both of which are ascribed to a specific moral tradition. While Friends schools have aligned with various educational movements over the twentieth century, Franek (2007) argues that these schools follow a clear set of principles distinct from theories of educational reform. He writes,

Quaker schools could be accused by some of being the catch-all for a half-dozen relatively recent advances in education—from multiculturalism to multiple intelligences—except that Quaker testimonies have been around for centuries, long before even John Dewey put his humanitarian stamp on American education.” (Franek 2007:14)

The Quaker testimonies serve as a clear-cut set of principles on which Friends schools are founded. While Hays (1994) argues that all schools morally socialize students, and the scholars of elite private schools describe the set of values imparted to students—and how it is imparted—Quaker and military schools are distinct in their commitment to a singular tradition with a long history in the United States.

¹⁰ While Khan (2010) focuses on the changing demographics of the student body at St. Paul’s School and other peer institutions, the faculty and administration are slowly becoming more racially diverse as well. However, a majority of teachers across the country in private, as well as public, schools are white (National Center for Educational Statistics 2018).

Chapter III

Quaker Education: History and Present Day

Since its founding in the seventeenth century, The Religious Society of Friends has put forth and strictly followed a clear theological and social ideology that has, at various points, come in conflict with mainstream society. Early Quakers were visibly different from the rest of society; they were marked by their plain speech, dress, and architecture. Thus, scholars of Quaker education note that the early British Friends initially established schools not only to train their children to live in the Quaker community, but also to shield them from the influence of the outside world (Angell et al. 2018; Benjamin 1976; Brinton 1940; Parish 1866). Quakers who settled in North America brought with them these educational ideals and settled schools to serve both Quaker and non-Quaker children alike. The rise in public schools in the United States in the nineteenth century, and specifically in Philadelphia where many Quakers were located, threatened the success of Friends schools as some Quakers did not have the means to pay tuition. Thus, Friends' schools have continuously grappled with the balance between educating students in Quaker ideology and attracting wealthy students to populate the school. The history of one Philadelphia-area school, Friends' Central, demonstrates how an institution confronts this tension. School leadership and policies adapted to the trends of society and the demands of operating a private school on the Main Line, while maintaining a Quaker ethos.

HISTORY OF QUAKER SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES

The Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, was founded by the dissenting preacher George Fox in mid-seventeenth century England during a period of religious innovation and challenges to the Catholic Church. Unlike the Catholic Church which rests on a hierarchy in

which God's word is mediated through priests, George Fox and his followers believed that God¹¹ exists within and speaks to every person. Soon after its founding, Quaker missionaries spread the religion throughout England and North America. One of these Friends was William Penn, who was gifted territory in the North America in 1681 by King Charles II of England. This land was soon settled by British Quakers and established as a colony of religious freedom that would come to be known as Pennsylvania.

Friends who settled in North America brought with them the tradition of establishing schools to educate Quaker children. Early British Quakers were skeptical of higher education because it was primarily associated with the training of Catholic clergy (Angell and Brown 2018: 130). However, finding a need to formally expose youth to the tenets of the religion, beginning in 1668, George Fox established schools in England to educate Quaker children in both theology and practical, civil affairs (Bryans 2000:9; O'Donnell 2013:407). Two decades later in 1689, William Penn founded William Penn Charter School, the first Quaker school in North America. Over the course of the following century, the Pennsylvania Quakers first established elementary schools, followed by secondary schools, and later colleges across the United States (Brinton 1940). Similarly to the previously detailed secular private schools, many of the stable and successful Quaker secondary schools in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were boarding schools (Brinton 1940:43). These boarding schools provided a "family-like atmosphere" (Benjamin 1976:36), which was instrumental in cultivating children's intellect and morality.

Friends' schools have historically been lauded for various inclusive educational ideologies and practices. While at first, many North American Quaker schools only admitted

¹¹ The divine is not understood in exactly the same way by all Quaker individuals nor communities. In the twenty-first century, Friends describe the divine using a number of words including: "God, the Light Within, Christ, Spirit, Seed, and Inward Teacher" (Friends General Conference n.d.).

Friends, in 1877, Philadelphia monthly meetings¹² permitted these schools “to open their doors to ‘the world’s children’” (Benjamin 1976:35). The acceptance on non-Friends to “select” schools—schools that only admitted Quakers (Benjamin 1976)—in the latter part of the nineteenth century was coupled by an increase of non-Friends in all Quaker schools. For example, by 1890, only one-fifth of the student population at Friends’ Central School, a Quaker day school in the Philadelphia-area, was Quaker (Benjamin 1976:35). In addition to admitting non-Quakers, Friends’ schools have also been at forefront of educating women and Black children. Since the early British schools, Quakers educated both boys and girls, though originally in separate schools, and considered men and women to be spiritual equals. In the seventeenth century, Quakers set up schools for the less affluent with the goal of reducing crime through moral training (Angell et al. 2018). Friends have also been leaders in racial equality in education. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, Friends meetings were some of the first groups to set up schools to educate Black children and in the 1940s and 1950s, Quaker schools began admitting Black students to historically white schools.

Quaker schools are not widely written about in the present-day debates on education, but nonetheless over the past thirty years have been the occasional subject of study. As of 2010, over 70 independent Quaker schools in the United States were serving 21,000 students and had 4,500 teachers (Angell et al. 2018:128). Quaker schools also operate outside of the United States and England; the highest number of Friends schools per country is in Kenya (Angell et al. 2018:128). While a number of scholars have written on the history of Quaker education, very few have

¹² In Quakerism, the term “meeting” both refers to Meeting for Worship, a time during which Friends gather for silent worship, and the local level of administration. Monthly meetings are the primary unit of administration; members of a Monthly meeting gather monthly to discuss business. These local meetings often come together to form a network of meetings that may meet quarterly or twice a year to tend to business, which are called regional meetings, or quarterly meetings. Yearly meetings encompass many monthly meetings and often a number of regional meetings. Moreover, a majority of Friends schools were founded by monthly meetings, and many continue to be under the care of those meetings.

studied the contemporary situation of Friends schools. In the past 30 years, a handful of scholars of education and sociology have studied various aspects of contemporary Friends schools including the moral traditions of Quaker boarding schools (Hays 1994), the lived experience of Meeting for Worship (Franek 2007), and how school leadership addresses social class (Kim 2011).¹³ While Hays (1994) and Kim (2011) both address the unique ideology of Friends' schools in the twenty-first century, neither scholar examines if and how Quaker schools reproduce elite values. This thesis aspires to contribute to the limited literature on twenty-first century Friends schools and examine how the ethos of a Quaker school is mitigated with the traditions and positions of private schools. The following section addresses how the unique Quaker educational ideology has been developed over time parallel to changing expectations for private education.

TENSIONS IN QUAKER EDUCATION

Since the establishment of Friends, Quakers have had clear ideological and pedagogical goals for schooling that have historically stemmed from the desire to shield Friends from mainstream society. As Quaker scholar Howard H. Brinton articulated in 1940, "Education is meaningless unless it has a goal. The goal of Quaker education has been, as its history shows, perpetuation of the Quaker way of life" (p. 5). He asserted that the aim of schooling was to train students to operate in a larger society, whether that be embracing the philosophy of Catholicism, communism, or Quakerism (Brinton 1940:9). Thus, Quakers believed that their children must be educated in Quaker philosophy, not another, potentially conflicting value system. Moreover, the

¹³ Additional dissertations on Quaker schools include Bryans' (2000) writing on leadership in Friends schools and Hughes' (2008) study on social class and college choice.

Quaker way of life was distinct from the broader society in England and North America in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and at times was publicly antagonistic to social norms.

Scholars often point to the Quaker emphasis on simplicity as the main point of discord with mainstream society, and the impetus for founding distinctly Friends schools. Living simply is supposed to provide a way of life in which one can focus on religious experience without the distractions of materialism (Lapansky 2018:150). Friends outwardly manifested simplicity primarily through their dress, speech and architecture (Lapsansky 2018).¹⁴ Scholar Philip S. Benjamin (1976) writes, “Because of its visibility, the simplicity issue became a battleground in the fight over preservation of Friends’ distinctiveness” (p. 26). Due to Quakers’ discord with popular society, the Religious Society of Friends established “guarded” schools in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. The term “guarded” signified education that both cultivated the individual in the manner of Quaker ideals and shielded them from the unnecessary fashions of society (Angell et al. 2018; Brinton 1940; Parrish 1976). It is for this reason, too, that many of the early Friends schools in North America were “select” schools, only admitting Quaker children. While many Quakers would argue that simplicity is not the most important tenet of the religion, it did provide a significant impetus for the creation of separate Quaker schools both in England and North America beginning in the late seventeenth century.

As Quaker schools were founded with the intention of teaching young Friends the Quaker way of life, the educational ideology is grounded in four central social tenets that stem from Quaker theology. These social doctrines—Community, Pacifism, Equality, and Simplicity—arise

¹⁴ Early Friends adopted the use of the informal second person, “thee,” “thou,” and “thy,” in place of the formal “you,” regardless of the social position of with whom they were speaking (Lapsansky 2018:149). Quakers also donned simple clothing, in solidarity with the poor and because of their concern about the exploitative labor of the textile industry (Lapsansky 2018:152). Architecture as well was simple, which primarily meant unadorned structures (Lapsansky 2018:154).

out of the central belief in the Religious Society of Friends in the Inward Light¹⁵ and the teachings of Jesus. As such, there is overlap between them (Brinton 1940:25). The following are excerpts from Brinton's description of each doctrine to explicate Quaker philosophy.

COMMUNITY is present in the attempt of the meeting to become a unified, closely integrated group of persons which is...a living whole which is more than the sum of its parts ... PACIFISM...might be called peaceableness...[which] exists as a positive power by which an inner appeal is made to the best that is in man, rather than an external pressure by forces from outside him ... EQUALITY is present in the meeting in the equal opportunity for all to take part in the worship or business regardless of age, sex, or official position ... SIMPLICITY...[generally] means the absence of superfluity. (Brinton 1940:26-27)

These social doctrines have been, and continue to be, translated into educational policies. Some of these key policies that have set Friends schools apart from public schools and other independent schools are non-violent discipline, educational opportunity regardless of gender, race, or class, and emphasis on teaching practical subjects. What has been and continues to be at the center of Quaker education is a philosophy that stems from the Quaker belief in the Inner Light, which signifies that of God in every person. Quaker schools strive to cultivate both the intellectual and moral growth of their students and view those students as individuals. Many contemporary Quaker schools make use of the acronym S.P.I.C.E.S. to signify the Quaker testimonies that guide the school: simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and service. Many, if not all, Quaker schools require students to attend Meeting for Worship weekly and participate in community service projects.

These Quaker principles and practices often come into conflict with mainstream social norms, and Quaker institutions, like Quaker individuals and communities, have to negotiate these contradictions. One such example of a conflict between Quaker philosophy and mainstream

¹⁵ This concept is articulated both as the Inward Light and Inner Light. Contemporary texts make use of Inner Light with more frequency.

society is the curriculum of North American Quaker schools in the twentieth century. Early Friends rejected visual art, drama, music, and novels, because they were seen as superfluous. Art and fiction were not taught in schools. However, by 1940, Quakers no longer considered these forms of expression incompatible with the doctrine of simplicity (Brinton 1940:31). Another example in which Quaker school leaders adapted school practices to contemporary social expectations is with the case of curriculum in the early twentieth century. In the 1920s, Philadelphia-area heads of school adapted the curriculum to specifically cater to admission to institutions of higher education following completion of secondary school: “At the turn of the century J. Henry Bartlett at Friends’ Select, J. Eugene Baker at Friends’ Central, and William Wickersham at Westtown all made changes in curriculum with an eye more to admission requirements of the colleges than to a consistent upholding of Friends’ principles” (Benjamin 1976:38). Benjamin asserts that, at this juncture, school leaders valued external social pressures over Quaker dogma in determining how to operate schools. He goes on to say that “the erosion of Quaker distinctiveness” cannot exclusively be attributed to external pressures (Benjamin 1976:47); the push came from within the Quaker community itself.

Along with the changing curriculum, Quaker leaders and scholars have highlighted the key tension between Quaker ideology and the realities of operating a private school. In the 1940s, Brinton described the important shift from Quaker schools being institutions where Friends sent their children to be educated intellectually, morally, and religiously to schools that educated the children of the elite.

Quaker educators are faced with a dilemma. Shall they allow Quaker schools and colleges to develop solely as institutions of excellent standing, meeting the needs of families who can afford the luxury of private schools, or shall they appeal to a more limited constituency by discovering and applying the distinguishing characteristics which a Quaker school ought to embody today? (Brinton 1940:6)

Brinton calls into question the ability of Friends schools to continue to serve families who can afford private education, while simultaneously upholding and carrying out the doctrines of Quaker education. In fact, schools operated in such a way that even Friends could not afford to attend them: “The mounting fees of Friends’ schools have placed them beyond the reach of many Friends of average or less than average means” (Brinton 1940:92). He goes on to say, “unless Friends’ schools have something distinctive to offer in carrying out Friends’ doctrines, especially the testimony for simplicity, their very existence violates this testimony. They may actually strengthen the sense of class consciousness in those who can afford to patronize them” (Brinton 1940:92).

By contrast, Benjamin (1976) takes a more positive point of view of this tension. He writes that Quaker values in the 1920s were not compromised in schooling, but instead were adapted for the times. He writes, “The essence of the Quaker testimonies survived. Simplicity was not limited to denials of art and literature. And pacifism might still survive the playing fields at Westtown.¹⁶ Dedicated Quaker teachers continued to instill respect and love for these doctrines...The commitment to equality proved durable as well” (Benjamin 1976:38). Benjamin (1976) argues that Quaker schools necessarily adapt the core testimonies to contemporary society. As previously demonstrated, over the four centuries of Quaker schools, it has been necessary for schools to change their practices, while still keeping in line with Quaker philosophy.

Benjamin (1976) states that this move toward mainstream educational practices came from within the Quaker community, not from outside. He writes, “The erosion of Quaker distinctiveness in these schools and colleges cannot be attributed along to outside influences...the

¹⁶ Westtown School is Quaker, co-educational day and boarding school located in West Chester, PA.

real push for acculturation came from Friends themselves” (p. 47). While Brinton (1940) calls into question Friends schools’ ability to uphold their ideals while also catering to a mainstream, elite public, Benjamin (1976) sees the adaptation of schools’ practices as keeping in line with Quaker philosophy. However, Benjamin (1976) does not specifically address the ability of Friends’ schools to remain distinct while also embodying the prestige of a high-achieving private school.

In the past thirty years, a few scholars have studied the way in which Quaker educational ideology presents in contemporary schools, which lays the groundwork to understand the tension between that philosophy and private school culture in contemporary Friends schools. Hays’ (1994) book on the moral traditions of Quaker and military boarding schools utilizes a moral framework to study these schools. Hays (1994) emphasizes that Quaker schools are “self-consciously moral” institutions (p. 3). While the assumption remains in American society that all schools should be sites of moral socialization of children, this goal often goes unspoken. Schools like Quaker schools and military boarding schools, on the other hand, intentionally and self-consciously present a clear moralizing project. Kim (2011) provides an in-depth characterization of a single Quaker school, with a focus on how school officials and faculty understand social class. Although Kim (2011) did not ask participants specifically about the school’s philosophy, they articulated a clear ethos. They described the school as being an equalizer for students from many social classes. Participants in Kim’s (2011) study did not articulate this ethos through a Quaker lens, though the concept of equalization of students is in line with the Quaker conception of equality. Another scholar of Quaker schools, Mark Franek (2007), describes the lived experience of Meeting for Worship by students in the early 2000s at William Penn Charter School. His characterization describes students’ relationship to Meeting for Worship, one of the

most central practices in a Quaker school, that is distinct from Quaker theorists' original goal. While some students appreciated Meeting for Worship as a time to build community and partake in self-reflection, others found it boring and/or used the time to sleep. Hays (1994), Kim (2011), and Franek (2007) demonstrate that Quaker philosophy and practices are central to twenty-first Friends schools. However, as demonstrated by Franek (2007), these core Quaker principles and practices are not always carried out in the way early Quaker practitioners intended. While some students benefited from the religious aspect of meeting for worship, others found the experience uncomfortable or boring (Franek 2007).

These scholars of twenty-first century Quaker schools do address the core tension described by Brinton (1940): Friends schools risk losing their distinctiveness by catering to wealthy families to populate the school. This historical tension persists in contemporary Quaker schools. Franek (2007) writes, "It is not hard to imagine the various challenges facing the modern independent school (including their students) in a competitive college-bound market, challenges that appear to be opposed to the Quaker way of life" (p. 25). Similarly, the Head of School in Kim's (2011) study articulated, "I think that's the ambivalence of a Quaker school. You've got on the one hand, this—the whole system is built on wealth and privilege and yet, as a Quaker school, we're supposed to be above all that so we live in that dance all the time" (p. 69). Unlike Brinton (1940) in the 1940s, these scholars and participants do not express concern about the tension. Instead, Franek (2007) and the Head of School of a Philadelphia Friends school (Kim 2011) are more concerned with naming the tension between schools that pride themselves on rejecting affluence while simultaneously offering a luxury service to those who can afford it—and to some extent, those the school deems worthy of funding. While there may still be unrest in Quaker communities about whether the schools are "Quaker enough," the scholarship

on twenty-first century Friends schools does not explicitly express concern about this. Instead, this tension is portrayed as a reality of Quaker schools.

HISTORY OF FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL

This study intends to unpack this tension between private school prestige and Quaker values of simplicity and equality by studying one school: Friends' Central School, a co-educational independent Quaker school. The school serves about 750 students in nursery-12th grade. Though this thesis is primarily concerned with the way in which Friends' Central faculty and administrators resolve these conflicting ideologies in 2019, a history of the school provides necessary context for the contemporary philosophy and practices of the school. Over the 174 years since its founding, Friends' Central has grappled with the question of if and how to adapt Quaker principals to contemporary concerns, as well as the financial reality of running a private school. This question primarily came into play in periods when school enrollment waned, or in the case of school desegregation in the 1940s, when enrollment had the potential to be threatened. In these instances, the school did not have a singular approach to attracting students; both financial realities and Quaker principals were weighed in the decisions.

Friends' Central School was founded during a time of schism within the Quaker community in Philadelphia and was established to educate both boys and girls, as well as Friends and non-Friends. Former teacher, principal, and school archivist, Clayton L. Farraday chronicles the school history from this point in *Friends' Central School 1845-1984*. Cherry Street Monthly Meeting, a Hicksite¹⁷ society, along with Green Street and Spruce Street Monthly Meetings

¹⁷ This divide occurred first in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Led by farmer Elias Hicks, about two-thirds of the meeting split off into a sect that placed more value on the Inward Light, while the remaining Orthodox members of the meeting put a greater emphasis on the bible to guide individual faith (Farraday 1984:2).

founded Friends' Central School in September of 1845 on the property of the Cherry Street Meeting. The tuition was fifteen dollars a term, and the stated qualifications for admission were as follows: "capability of reading with facility books used in the school, ability to write a legible hand and an elementary knowledge of arithmetic, grammar, and geography" (Farraday 1984:4). Students and faculty attended Meeting for Worship every week at Cherry Street Monthly Meeting (Farraday 1984:13-14).

During the same time period, the Philadelphia Board of Education was establishing free schools which caused Friends' Central's enrollment to suffer. Many Quaker families opted to send their children to these public schools instead of paying the tuition required Friends' Central School. The Friends committee on education noted, "'Temptation is now strongly presented to surrender the plastic mind of infancy to the forming hand of the stranger'" (Farraday 1984:5). Quaker leaders in Philadelphia believed that Quaker children should be educated within their own community and tradition, and not socialized to the mainstream through a public school education. However, some Quaker families saw public schools as a less-costly alternative to private Friends schools, despite the fact that these schools did not train for an idealized Quaker society.

Enrollment continued to be a problem at Friends' Central school through the end of the nineteenth century. Due to waning admission prospects, the very next year after the school's opening, 1846, the new principal was informed of the school's financial problems and he made the decision to admit students more liberally, with less regard for their academic preparation. This is the first instance Farraday notes in which Friends' Central compromised their ideals, in this case academic rigor, to admit enough students to keep the school door open. Low enrollment persisted through the second half of the nineteenth century. As a remedy, the school offered two

incentives to Quaker families: tuition breaks for a child if one parent was a Friend and a fund of three hundred dollars to assist families who couldn't afford to pay tuition (Farraday 1984:12). This solution prioritized admitting students who were Quaker, even if they could not pay, the opposite of the tension Brinton (1940) describes of Friends' schools admitting families who did not hold Quaker values because they could pay the tuition.

In the early twentieth century, the school continued to solidify its educational aims. A 1916 survey of the school found it to be a school of "high aims—high aims in reference to scholarship, physical development, social efficiency and character of its students. We find that the aims are progressive. What sufficed for yesterday is not good enough for today and will be quite inadequate for tomorrow" (Farraday 1984:34). Friends' Central was not, it seems, plagued by fears that changing the school would stray too far from Quaker ideology—though it's possible some members of the community felt this. Instead, during the time of the progressive education movement, Friends' Central embraced the notion of adapting to the times.

The period of 1920 to 1950 was characterized by great changes at Friends' Central. In the 1920s, school leadership decided to move the school out of the city to the Wistar Morris estate in Overbrook, which demonstrated the importance of leisure and recreation time in the school's philosophy. With the onset and aftermath of the Great Depression, financial difficulty continued to plague the school in the 1930s and 1940s causing the school board increased tuition.

Throughout the 1940s, students, parents, administration, and the school board debated admitting Black students to Friends' Central. This debate was part of a national conversation about segregated schooling in schools across the United States. In this debate, questions of the school's principles and its financial stability came into conflict. Some believed that all qualified students should be admitted in keeping with the Quaker testimonies. Others worried that

admitting Black students would drive away white families and cause financial instability. Head of School Richard McFeely himself believed that Black students should be admitted and eventually they were in 1948 (Farraday 1984:87-89). It is especially noteworthy that Friends' Central desegregated in that year, because the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision that ruled segregated schools as unconstitutional did not come until 1954. In the case of desegregation, both Friends testimonies and financial realities were important factors, though the financial considerations did not inhibit living by the school's testimonies as they were interpreted in the 1940s.

Post-1950 was another period of progressive innovation at Friends' Central, in which traditional fixtures of Quaker schooling were challenged. Students began to be more involved in school policy, including protesting the strict dress code in 1969 (Farraday 1984:107-108). Dress has historically been an arena of conflict between Quakers and mainstream society. Early Friends wore simple clothing as an expression of their rejection of worldly materialism and in solidarity with the poor (Lapsansky 2018:152). Friends' Central's loosening of the dress code in response to student protest indicates that school leadership recognized the need to conform to mainstream society in this arena. A few year prior to the loosening of the dress code, there was a change in the makeup of the Board of Trustees. The board decided that not all of its members had to be Quakers, a composition with better reflected the demographics of the students and faculty, very few of whom were Quaker at that time. Thus, school leadership itself moved away from a strict adherence to Quakerism.

The final epoch that Farraday covers is 1971 to 1984, during which time school leadership continued to articulate the school's philosophy. In 1971, recently hired Headmaster Thomas A. Wood demonstrated a particular interest in assessing the school's strengths and

weaknesses. In the midst of this self-study, Wood summarized some of the findings in the following excerpt about the Statement of Purpose from the Headmaster's Memo in 1972:

School community should reflect the creative potentials of the larger society of which it is a part. For this reason, the admissions policies and scholarship grants of the School are directed toward the establishment, in all grades, of a representative balance among students of differing religion, racial, social, and economic backgrounds. (Farraday 1984:118-119)

This statement focuses on the school's desire to carry out inclusive admissions practices. The School Planning Committee reaffirmed the school's commitment to upholding the tenets of Quakerism and cultivating the child as a whole—morally and academically—and as an individual.

As Friends' Central School's ideology and practices developed over time to adapt to both contemporary society and the practical demands of operating a private school, school leadership placed a great emphasis on keeping with Quaker ideology. Both Farraday's (1984) history and the school website describe that, since its founding, Friends' Central has maintained a commitment to inclusivity and to cultivating each child's intellect, spirit, and ethic (Friends' Central School n.d.). There has been well-documented concern about Friends schools' ability to adapt to changing times while keeping true to Quaker doctrine. Quaker scholar Howard Brinton (1940) expressed worry about the changing of Friends schools in response to pressures of mainstream society. Kraushaar (1972) similarly noted,

The genius of the Quaker school historically was its capacity to develop in the student the virtues of simplicity, conscientiousness, sincerity and tolerance, along with the love of learning. The aim of the inspired community is to link every individual with the Divinity in a directly personal renewing relationship. Quakers themselves express concern over whether their schools today fulfill this unique mission or whether they tend rather to bolster the sense of status and material success in their largely middle and upper middle class school consistency. (P. 44)

The question of whether Quaker schools can offer a distinctly Quaker education while also catering to middle- and upper-class families who can pay tuition to attend private school is widely documented and rarely resolved. Farraday's (1984) history of Friends' Central documents the school adapting to mainstream society. The school changed its progressive ideas of inclusion and diversity with the admission of girls and non-friends since the founding and desegregation in the 1940. In addition to expanding school admission policies for the purposes of inclusion, Friends' Central has also changed its guidelines in response to waning enrollment. While Farraday's (1984) book gives a look into how Friends' Central School has addressed the pressure—both internal and external—to adapt to mainstream educational and prep school practices, the information available on the history is very limited. Thus, to understand how the school contends with and resolves this tension, the following chapters explore in-depth the situation of Friends' Central in 2019 drawing on interviews with seven faculty and staff members.

Chapter IV

Transmitting the Ethos of Friends' Central

Faced with widespread concern that Quaker schools are unable to maintain their distinct educational goals in the face of mainstream expectations, Friends' Central faculty members and administrators nevertheless articulated a clear ethos of the school that is unmistakably Quaker. The naming of a distinct ethos, though not unique to Quaker schools, is a central aspect of being a school that has an explicit moral philosophy. Kraushaar (1972) postulates about religious schools, "Church schools of every denomination are bound to ask: What is distinctive about *this* school? What does it do for the young that the public school, given its nature and mission, is unable to do?" (p. 44). To justify running a private school, that school must have a unique goal. For Quaker schools, that goal is identified as a religious tradition. As Hays (1994) described, Friends' schools, along with military academies, are designed to uphold a specific tradition, and these institutions have a self-awareness of this framework. Similarly, Kim (2011)'s research demonstrated that the Philadelphia-area independent Quaker she studied had a clear ethos that was manifested in the styles of student dress, families' cars, etc., as well as the assumptions those associated with the school make about its population's social class. When I asked participants how Friends' Central is distinctive, many pointed to the school's ethos, which they also articulated as the school's values or North Star. Aside from articulating the ethos itself, the faculty members and administrators described the process of acclimatizing new students to Friends' Central and how they define student success. They placed an emphasis on articulating a clear ethos and transmitting it to students, with the hope that alumni/ae will live out this ethos after graduation.

THE ETHOS OF FRIENDS' CENTRAL SCHOOL

The seven faculty members and administrators I interviewed articulated clear values that set Friends' Central School apart from other public, independent, and even Quaker schools: it strives to nurture the whole child: ethically, spiritually, and academically.¹⁸ When asked about the distinctiveness of Friends' Central, Mark,¹⁹ an Upper School Quakerism and Spanish teacher, said,

[Historian of Quaker education] Paul Lacey...talks about the ethos of a Friends school ... When you walk into a Friends school, you can't touch it, but there's something different in the way that teachers and students interact and students and students and faculty and faculty, the adults and the child, work that they do together, the sharing that they do together, that feels different than at another type of independent school.

As Hays (1994) and Kim (2011) postulate, Mark articulated that there is a unique ethos of a Friends school. The other teachers and administrators characterized the Friends' Central ethos in congruent yet varied ways. When asked what these values are and what makes the school distinct, each interviewee pointed to Quakerism as an overarching philosophy that drives the school. However, they similarly struggled to define that Quaker ethos. Ruth, the Quaker Coordinator described it as a shadow curriculum. She elaborated,

I don't know exactly [how] to define it for you, shadow curriculum, but what I understood from it is that it's like the ethos of the place. The Quaker piece of it is the shadow curriculum, except for our Quakerism classes, you might not find it formally taught. But it's all that stuff that we do that's forming the spiritual, ethical grounding for students and for faculty and for staff.

¹⁸ Nurturing the whole child is a concept that is not unique to Friends' Central, nor Quaker schools. Cookson and Persell (1985) note that this expectation is characteristic of private schools, especially boarding schools in which the family does not have a great influence (p. 22). However, Friends' Central views this education of the whole child through a Quaker lens.

¹⁹ To preserve the anonymity of participants, pseudonyms are used for all seven Friends' Central faculty and administrators. Some teachers prefer to be referred to by their first names, in the Quaker tradition of equality and plain speech, and thus those individuals are referred to as such here. Others are referred to with a title and last name.

Ruth described the role of Quakerism in Friends' Central as a foundational element that runs throughout the school. Kraushaar (1972) suggests that it may be the conflict itself between religiosity and business operations that makes Quaker ideology hard to define. He writes, "The Quaker mystique with its blend of religious innerness, worldwide social service, pacifism and shrewd business entrepreneurship defies exact characterization" (p. 42). This may be the answer for why interviewees struggled to define the school's ethos, despite their insistence that there was a clear ideology, specifically a Quaker ideology, present in the school. Though many participants initially struggled to define the ethos of the school, many nonetheless gave rich responses.

In their descriptions of the role of Quakerism in the ethos at Friends' Central, many of the interviewees drew on specific tenants of the religion, including the testimonies of community, equality, peace, silence, and continuing revelation. The first of these three tenets are common social doctrines, defined by Brinton (1940) in chapter three. Silence is the way of worship in Quakerism, the manner in which Friends connect with God. Finally, continuing revelation stems from Quaker theology that God's Truth continues to be revealed over time.

Community, Peace, and Equality

When asked what makes Friends' Central distinctive, Ms. Stewart, the physics teacher, shared the most impactful moment of her first visit to Friends' Central. She recounted seeing students clean up the cafeteria after lunch, referred to as lunch co-op. This practice indicated to Ms. Stewart that students are stewards of the school; they are invested in the school and the school community. Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Education Coordinator, too, spoke about the role of community. When asked what makes Friends' Central distinctive, he said, "The most

immediate thing that comes to my mind is that I think this place, when it is most true to itself, is very deliberate about community.” He went on to say that the other Quaker testimonies, such as peace and equality, have an impact on the school too.

Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher looked to the principle of equality as a distinct marker of the Friends’ Central’s ethos. He stated, “It doesn't mean that everybody's the same, but can a child speak truth to me and learn how to do that in a respectful, loving way? Where I receive that and I say, ‘Wow, yeah, they're right.’” While in this quote, Mark speaks specifically of equality in the teacher-student relationship, he and other participants also talked about seeking equality in admissions. In terms of admissions policies, the school has labored²⁰ with questions of equity and inclusion, as chronicled by Farraday (1984). At many points in the school’s history, it has been ahead of the times on embracing social equality, including admitting Black students, Jewish students, and international students, and being openly welcoming to LGBTQ+ students before peer institutions. To Mark, being the school known as the place “where all the Jewish kids go” or “where all the gay kids go” is a good thing, because it means the school is living out the principle of equality. He also noted that these policies have changed over time. Ending in the year of publication, 1984, Farraday’s (1984) history of the school does not mention LGBTQ+ students, while in 2019, the school is very deliberately LBGT+ friendly. Mark sees the ability for the school to embrace changing conceptions of inclusivity and equality as a testament to the school’s ethos.

The third testimony that interviewees focused on when speaking about the core values of Friends’ Central was peace. Ms. Stewart, the physics teacher, pointed to service learning as a way in which the school embodies the peace testimony. Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish

²⁰ Mark used the Quaker term “labor with,” to describe the process of wrestling with a question or an issue. This laboring is part of the “intellectual but also the spiritual process” of school dealings.

teacher agreed that the school promotes peace, though not exclusively through service learning.

He said,

People often point towards service programs as an outward representation of peace. I think that if that's all you look at, you're missing the point of the peace testimony. The peace testimony is not just doing good in the world. It flows out of our theology and Quakers have been persecuted for it through time.

While service learning does promote peace, Mark stated that the doctrine of peace has historically been a much more countercultural and risky position to hold. Teaching peace is not unique to Friends' Central; other independent schools also believe in it. However, Friends' Central has intentionally put a focus on teaching and promoting peace, due to its importance in Quaker social philosophy.

Silence and Continuing Revelation

Beyond the Quaker testimonies, interviewees described silence and continuing revelation as two principal values of Friends' Central School, both of which are central to Quakerism. Ms. Stewart, the physics teacher observed, "I don't know any other place where you can stand in front of a group of 400 high school students and say, let's begin with a moment of silence and there's instant quiet." Friends' Central teaches students how to settle into and sit in silence, which is contrary to the frenzy of many high schools. Ruth, the Quaker Coordinator also emphasized the importance of silence at Friends' Central. In the Quaker tradition, silence plays a fundamental function of centering oneself and connecting one to the divine. At Friends' Central, the two primary ways in which Quaker silence is practiced is in moments of silence, as described by Ms. Stewart above, and in meeting for worship. Ruth named learning to sit in silence as one of the gifts of a Quaker education. She said,

Students here...have the opportunity to develop a comfort in doing that, in being able to sit in silence, but also experience what happens ... What happens inside yourself? ... And it being different than...it's not about meditation by yourself, but you're sitting in silence with a whole other room of people. And what can happen in that.

In conversation with many interviewees about meeting for worship, they acknowledged that the practice can be very difficult for high school students, especially in the middle of the school day. Nevertheless, the practice of meeting for worship is one of the most important and distinct elements of Friends' Central.

Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, elaborated on the importance of meeting for worship as a distinguishing feature of the school. He said, "If you looked at everything with the institution, beyond the ethos and all of that, in many ways we're not different than Episcopal Academy and Shipley, other co-ed day schools in the area that are not Quaker schools. But it's the meeting for worship that no other type of school has." While Friends' Central may boast a progressive, Quaker philosophy, Mark suggests that many of the structures and practices of the institution are not all that different from other Main Line independent schools. However, he does indicate that one practice that definitively separates Friends' Central from the other private schools in the area is meeting for worship.

Continuing revelation, another central tenet of Quakerism, leads Friends' Central teachers and administrators to believe that the search for knowledge is ongoing. Ruth, the Quaker Coordinator described continuing revelation in Quakerism as God's Truth continuing to be revealed throughout time. "When we think about how that affects Quaker education, stressing that we're continuing to learn and develop, we're continuing to know more, that we don't know everything, and that the truth is not just set there, it's not set," she went on to say. Ms. Beverly, the principal also stated that continuing revelation is a distinguishing element of Friends' Central. She framed it in terms of professional development: "With all of their degrees, and all of

their experience, and we are blessed to have teachers with both, they're still questioning, and they're still learning, and they're still open to learning from their students.”

A Quaker Sentiment

Along with the previously stated set of Quaker values that make up the philosophy of Friends' Central, interviewees also drew on aspects of the school's ideology that are Quaker in sentiment, though not explicitly so the participants' description. Dan, the Coordinator of Justice and Equity Education proposed that the school's "highest calling is to give young people the tools and skills to navigate a very beautiful, very complex world." For him, that included nurturing academic curiosity, bodily wellness and, most importantly, learning how to "have different ideas bump up against each other." Conflict resolution is one of the major areas that Dan is focusing on at all levels of Friends' Central. Later in the interview, he articulated the Quaker ideology behind how he reviews conflict resolution. He said, "If I really believe that God lives in you. And you believe God's in me. I can't just throw you out. You know what I'm saying? Even when I'm like really upset with you." Dan believes that this view on conflict is countercultural, similarly to how Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, highlighted pacifism as a brand of Quaker counterculture. While Dan did not explicitly name Quaker values in discussing Friends' Central's philosophy, Mr. Kelly, the Assistant Principal stated the opposite view: he suggested that the Quaker philosophy of education should not be exclusive to Friends Schools.

I wanted to be at a place that espoused and lived by the Quaker philosophy of education. Which I think is pretty standard and I think, not only common sensical, but seems to be the way every school should be. But this idea that you are educating the whole child, this idea that there is something special about everyone, whether you want to call it that of God or the light. Our job as educators is to nourish that, to bring that out, to make a child feel good about sharing that with other people.

For Mr. Kelly, the educational ethos that Friends' Central embodies is clearly Quaker. However, he believes that this philosophy should be the goal of educators and education more broadly.

The teachers and administrators interviewed described the ethos of Friends' Central as being clearly rooted in Quakerism and Quaker educational philosophy. Though at times this ethos may seem hard to pin down, all of the interviewees named specific values that formed part of the school's philosophy. Many of those tenets aligned with Quaker ideals, including the testimonies of equality, peace, and community, as well as silence and continuing revelation. As Mr. Kelly, the assistant principal said, many of these values may align—and he thinks should align—with the goals of all schools. However, in describing the school's philosophy, traditional prep school values like academic achievement were not the focus. Participants articulated a clear ethos to transmit to students that was clearly rooted in Quaker ideology.

SOCIALIZING NEW STUDENTS

The literature on elite schooling tends to focus on what happens once students leave the institution—where they go to college, what jobs they have, how much money they make, who they marry, etc.—or what they do and learn during their school years. However, what is largely missing from the study is the process of socializing students to the school itself. When asked about Friends' Central School values and distinctiveness, many of the faculty members and administrators were quick to reference the way in which the school conveys its unique ethos to new students. Khan (2010) refers to new student socialization as “finding one's place.” However, this concept goes beyond students and similarly applies to faculty and staff; all members of the school community must find their place and continue to do so throughout their time at the school. Being socialized into the St. Paul's School community means learning the value of

experience, for it is corporal experience that it valued. Students reject those who demonstrate entitlement by arriving at the school with previous knowledge, and instead value the process of learning the ins and outs of the institution corporally (Khan 2010:50-51). A similar process occurs at Friends' Central in which students must experience Friends' Central to become acclimated to school practices, vocabulary, and a mentality that are distinct from their previous schools. The emphasis on a practice of socialization reinforces the importance the school places on transmitting its distinct ethos to student.

Ms. Beverly, the principal, raised the topic of the need for a more robust orientation to the Upper School, which stems from the changing demographic ninth graders: a higher and higher percentage of the class is coming from a different middle school. Just eight years ago, the ninth-grade class was comprised of 80 students from the Friends' Central Middle School and 20 from other schools; one fifth of the ninth-grade class was new to the school. According to Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Education Coordinator, this year's class for the 2018-2019 school year is one-third new students and next year, he projected, "might be the first year where there are more new kids in ninth grade than kids coming from the eighth grade."

The goal of orienting new students to the Upper School is primarily concerned with transmitting the school's ethos to students, an ethos that students who have been through the Lower School and/or Middle School at Friends' Central have already embodied. Mr. Vicente elaborated on the need for socialization: "You can't rely on the fact that the majority of the ninth graders have that ethos that they're just bringing with them and that sort of oozes out of their pores." Like the socialization process Khan (2010) describes at St. Paul's School, through experiencing Friends' Central, students internalize and embody the ethos of the schools. Students who attended the Lower School or Middle School arrive in the Upper School with a certain leg

up: a familiarity with the Friends' Central mentality. On the other hand, students who arrive in the Upper School from other schools do not come as blank slates. They too, have learned an ethos from previous schools—even if that ethos isn't as clearly and self-consciously defined as Friends' Central's—which informs the way they relate to others and to the school itself.

Ms. Stewart, the physics teacher shared a poignant example of a new twelfth grader who initially struggled to acclimate to the Friends' Central way. She described,

This year, for the first time, I really saw a big difference in what a student might expect coming out of a public-school system into our school as a 12th grader. So we had a new 12th grader arrive. She came to my physics class. And the first month for her here was really terrible. She was coming from a completely different world. She came to my class and it was very crowded, but she sat with her back facing me. And what I could see on her screen was she was doing other work in my class. I was like, "What is this?" There was not the mutual respect. But after we, all of the teachers, everyone got together, we worked with her and stuff, by the time December rolled around, or it was actually late November, there was a moment when I was doing something else, she was in my room, and she said, "Oh I wish I'd been coming to this school all along" ... Something's different here. And I think it's that respect piece and that she's seen in a way she wasn't seen before.

First and foremost, this anecdote demonstrates that the ethos of Friends' Central extends beyond theory. This ideology implicates a certain manner of acting at school and in relation to others in the school community. Ms. Stewart understood the new twelfth grader's behavior in class to indicate that the expectations were different at her old school. Namely, she assumes that the school did not emphasize respect between teachers and students. This necessarily changes the way in which teachers and student behave toward one another. Ms. Stewart was surprised that the new twelfth grader sat her back turned and did work for another class, because in a Friends' Central classroom, this behavior would not happen. This anecdote also succinctly illustrates the result of the socialization process. After experiencing Friends' Central every day for the first few months of school and working closely with her teachers, this student expressed a desire to be at the school for even longer. While Khan (2010) emphasizes the importance of firsthand

experience in “finding one’s place” in St. Paul’s School, in this anecdote, it is not only experience that taught the new student the ways of Friends’ Central, but also a conscious effort by her teachers to convey the expectations for a Friends’ Central student.

Friends’ Central’s approach to schooling, and more generally the Quaker school approach, is not only different from other schools, but a distinctly difficult one in which to acclimate. Beyond the previously discussed school ethos, that implicates a manner in which to behave at school, as exemplified in the anecdote of the new twelfth grader, Quakerism itself has a distinct vocabulary and practices. When discussing a more robust orientation for new students, Ms. Beverly, the principal, described one of the goals as “demystifying Quakerism.” Quakerism is not a widely known religion, and there are a number of misconceptions about Friends in the public sphere. Part of the Friends’ Central’s socialization process is to teach students about Quakerism.

In this process of demystification, it is central for students to learn how to behave in and understand meeting for worship. They need to learn not only what the goal of meeting for worship is and why it’s important to Quakers and to the Friends’ Central community, but also how to sit, where to sit, and what to expect. Sociologist Mark Franek (2007) aptly describes the difficulty of sitting in meeting for worship, especially for those who are not practiced in it.

It is easy to see why the experience of sitting in near silence with peers and teachers each week strikes most as foreign, uncomfortable, even downright tedious. Most adults—even those with deep religious belief and veteran meditation skills—might find the communal practice of meeting for worship initially challenging.” (Franek 2007:90)

Franek (2007) finds that for some students, meeting for worship may become valuable during their time at Quaker school. For others, it may not “click” until they are an alumnus/a. For others, still, meeting for worship will never hold personal value (Franek 2007:91-92). Sitting in meeting for worship may be difficult for students who have been attending meeting every week

since Kindergarten but is especially uncomfortable for new students who do not know what to expect.

The primary way in which the Upper School transmits the ethos of the school to new students is through a ninth-grade semester-long course on justice and equity, sexuality and consent, and Quakerism. It has only in the past year or two that these three areas have solidified as key foci of the school, with programming driven by the three coordinators who I interviewed: the Coordinator of Justice and Equity Education, the Sexuality Education Coordinator, and the Quaker Coordinator. All ninth graders, new and returning, are required to take a course called Quaker School Life. This course aims to teach students the basics of Quakerism and human sexuality, while also educating students on how these concepts fit into being a part of a Quaker school community.

At Friends' Central, teachers and administrators place an emphasis on the need for students to learn and embody the school's ethos. This process occurs through first-hand experience attending the Upper School, the ninth-grade course on Quaker School Life, and a deliberate effort on the part of faculty to transmit Friends' Central's approach to school to new students. Faculty and staff articulated the goal of training students in the modus operandi of the school as necessary to being a part of the school community, as in the case of the new twelfth grader, and also beneficial to students after graduation.

STUDENT SUCCESS

While in secular elite prep schools, student success is largely tied to admission to an elite college or university, participants asserted that student success at Friends' Central is living out the school's ethos in college and beyond. Cookson and Persell (1985) elaborate on the importance of college admission in prep schools, "Like youths undergoing a tribal rite of passage

in which the badge of manhood is killing their first lion, prep youths have historically sought to bag an Ivy League college acceptance” (p. 167). However, they go on to say that Ivy League admission is much harder to obtain than earlier in the twentieth century. Since it is expected that all, or almost all, prep school graduates will attend college, the question for families, students, and the schools themselves becomes where they will continue their education. Parents and peers put immense pressure on students to attend the “right” college, which though no longer limited to the Ivy League, is narrowly defined (Cookson and Persell 1985:168). The function of prep schools has traditionally been to gain admission to a prestigious college or university where the aforementioned socialization process continues; prep schools actively maintain relationships with elite colleges to assure their students’ admission.

Friends’ Central does put emphasis on students attending colleges: almost all students attend college immediately after graduation, and many go to Ivy League schools or other prestigious institutions. However, when asked about student success, none of the participants mentioned attending a highly-ranked college. Instead, the overwhelming answer was that students ought to really know themselves and know how to be in community with others. As Ruth, the Quaker Coordinator put it succinctly, she hopes students recognize “the value of other people, the value of ourselves.” The articulation of student success was in direct alignment with the ethos of Friends’ Central. Students ought to not only learn, but also practice, the values that the school transmits while at Friends’ Central and in future endeavors. However, while speaking on student success, participants acknowledged that students are likely to go onto college and to positions of power post-college, following the trajectory of the traditional prep school student (Baltzell 1958; Mills 1956; Cookson and Persell 1985). Taking for given that Friends’ Central

graduates will go onto power, as the school does socialize students to join the elite, the school aims to provide students with a Quaker sensibility to embody in those positions of power.

When asked how they define student success, participants underscored the importance of knowing how to work with others. Mr. Kelly, the assistant principal elaborated on the importance of working with others:

I would love them to be able to recognize the importance of working with other people as opposed to against other people, as opposed to competing with other people. Also, recognizing that whatever it is they do, they are not going to be doing it in isolation. So, whatever it is they do, no matter how small they might see it, or even how big they may see it, it is going to have an impact on other people, it is going to have an impact on a community, or a company, or an institution.

Mr. Kelly emphasized the practicality of knowing how to work with others not against them; whatever students go on to do, it will be in relationship to others. Dan, the Coordinator of Justice and Equity Education, and Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Education Coordinator, similarly discussed their hope that students always recognize the humanity in others. Dan said, “We want to graduate students who can...[hold] out another person’s humanity and really able to grasp that concept. That like I’m going to interact with lots of different people, but I don’t have to treat them lesser than because I think I know more or better than them.” While traditional prep schools instill in students the legitimacy of distinction (Baltzell 1958; Cookson and Persell 1985; Khan 2010), Dan hopes that graduates of Friends’ Central do not see themselves as better than others. Instead, Friends’ Central alumnae/i should value the humanity in all other people equally.

To recognize and value the humanity in others, interviewees stressed the importance of knowing oneself. Dan, the Coordinator of Equity and Justice Education, stated that five or ten years after graduation, he hopes students are self-aware. “Students...really understand who they are or how they have evolved. And also, are giving themselves space to, you know, move into the future with curiosity and there might be some fear in there, but how they might grow. How

they continue to grow.” Being a successful graduate, he said, is having “some firmness and founding of who you are.” Beyond knowing oneself, teachers and administrators were concerned with students maintaining their well-being. Ms. Beverly, the principal, was especially concerned about the widespread anxiety in contemporary society and especially among young people. She said, “Certainly, of course, I want people to find success in college and beyond, but I want them to be able to handle the demands, whether they be easy or challenging, without making them sick.” In this statement, Ms. Beverly, acknowledges, even encourages, students being successful; however, she adds that this success should not come at the cost of their physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Despite the fact that individual faculty and administrators named self-awareness, well-being, and relationships with others as a measure of student success, the school as a whole may not always push that message. When asked how he defines student success and how Friends’ Central as a whole defines it, Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Education Coordinator said, “I think the answers ought to be the same. And I think because of the practical nature of the world, they probably aren’t exactly the same.” While he himself said that success would be “that somehow our academic and our social and our spiritual endeavors create somebody who knows themselves, who can love somebody else, and then want to take that further [into society],” he went on to say that sometimes that’s different from how the school defines success. However, he does “think that the school is, you know, 95% in sync with that. [he] just [thinks] that sometimes the benchmarks look different.” Although the individuals define student success in a very wholistic, individualized way, the institution seems to have goals that are more aligned with non-Quaker prep schools.

While Friends' Central faculty and administrators preach a version of student success that is very different from the traditional goals of a prep school, the school nonetheless feeds into elite colleges and universities. According to the college counseling page on the school website, "in the class of 2018, 96% of graduates chose to attend a four-year college, 1% chose to attend a two-year college, [and] 3% chose to take a gap year" (Friends Central School). The college counseling office also publishes a document of college choices from the past four years. Between 2014 and 2018, the school sent 67 students to Ivy League schools, including a whopping 47 to the University of Pennsylvania (Friends Central School). Assuming about 100 students per grade, the percent of students who attended Ivy League schools in those five years would be about 13%. Other students attended highly-ranked small liberal arts colleges—Williams College, Vassar College, Colby College—and highly-selective larger universities like University of California Berkeley and New York University. Whether stemming from parents, the school, or students themselves, there is clearly a drive for Friends' Central students to attend prestigious colleges and universities. As evidenced by Collins (1979)'s writing on the credential society, the way to social mobility in the United States is to get a credential from a prestigious college or university. Thus, to achieve professional and social success, Friends' Central students, like all prep school students are encouraged to attend elite colleges.

As alluded to in Dan's previously mentioned quote about not treating others as lesser-than, Friends' Central teachers and administrators understand that many students will go on to positions of power—that is what a prep school prepares them to do; however, participants hope that they do so with a Quaker mentality. Ms. Beverly, the principal, elaborated on what student success means at Friends' Central:

I hope they're Quakerized ... when I say Quakerized, I mean a sense that their own worth is connected to the worth of other people, that it's wonderful if you want to start your own

company, I love that, right? You want to be a leader. You want to be an executive. You want to make the decisions. As long as you take some piece of this Quaker piece that you got from Friend's Central with you with that.

Mr. Beverly recognizes the aspiration of many Friends' Central students to go on to positions of leadership. While encouraging this ambition, she hopes that students will do so in a way that takes into account the lessons they've learned at Friends' Central of community and equality. In the ongoing search for what makes a Quaker school, and specifically Friends' Central, distinct, teachers and administrators assert a clear drive to imbue in students a Quaker mentality that they will carry with them to the upper rungs of society.

Chapter V

Ethos in Practice

Recognizing that Friends' Central as a prep school prepares students to go on to elite colleges and universities and then join the ruling class in society, teachers and administrators endeavor to graduate students with a distinctly Friends' Central ethos, rooted in Quakerism, to embody in future positions of power. Participants raised the notion of a clear ethos of the school that teachers and administrators work to transmit to students during their time at Friends' Central. Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, described the ethos as something intangible in the school that makes it feel different from other independent schools. "When you walk into a Friends school, you can't touch it, but there's something different in the way that teachers and students interact...the sharing that they do together, that feels different than at another type of independent school."²¹ While this ethos was lifted up by many of the participants, it is also abstract. Mark continued, "That's great, but I'm not sure that's enough because it's intangible." While the previous chapter found that participants strive to transmit the ethos of the school to students, aside from the course for ninth graders on Quaker School Life, it remains somewhat unclear how teachers and administrators accomplish this goal. This chapter investigates participants' characterization of the curriculum and extra-curriculars at Friends' Central, two structures central to student's experience in the Upper School. Both the curriculum and extracurriculars closely mirror the offerings of traditional prep schools and it is these very structures that are fundamental to the socialization of students to power in non-Quaker prep schools. What makes Friends' Central's curriculum and extracurricular distinct is that while preparing student for power, they also serve to ingrain in students the ethos of the school.

²¹ Mark's full quote is printed on page 45.

CURRICULUM

At non-Quaker prep schools, the highly valued classical curriculum serves to distinguish graduates from a perceived less refined, less well-educated public (Cookson and Persell 1985). However, prep schools also offer courses outside of the classical curriculum; in fact, both when Cookson and Persell (1985) were writing in the 1980s and when Khan (2010) studied St. Paul's School in the 2000s, prep schools had an abundance of elective courses. Khan (2010) sees these numerous curricular offerings as a mark of the new elite's taste for openness. He believes that a mark of distinction for this group is their "omnivorousness" (Khan 2010:152). The varied curriculum still serves to set students apart from the average high school student while also helping to "[instill] in students a sense of their tremendous abilities and options in life" (Khan 2010:153). Students at St. Paul's School are cultivated to feel at ease in a wide array of circumstances, discussing numerous subjects. Thus, the curricular offerings themselves, both the classical curriculum and specialized electives, instill in students an elite mentality of superiority and openness and ease.

Friends' schools are widely known and praised for their academic rigor; the array of courses offered along with the rigorous graduation requirements put it on par with elite boarding schools. In many ways, Friends' Central's curriculum mirrors St. Paul's School in the numerous offerings in the arts, sciences, and history, as well as a rotating set of English electives for eleventh and twelfth graders. Some of these specialized courses include Modern Africa Advanced in history, Atmospheric Science & Climate Change in science, and Ensemble Building, Improvisation, & Play Making: Devised Theatre Practices in the Arts. Additionally, the graduation requirements at Friends' Central mirror those illustrated by Cookson and Persell

(1985): two years of arts, four years of English, two years of history, three years of math, two years of science, and 2 years of foreign language. Coleman et al. (1982) find that on average, American public-school students take one year fewer of English and math and more than a year fewer foreign language. Unlike many schools, public and private, Friends' Central does not offer Advanced Placement courses. However, the 2018-2019 Profile for College & University Admissions found on the Friends' Central college counseling webpage, states that "All FCS courses are taught at the honors level. Our Advanced courses equal or exceed the rigor of AP courses" (Friends' Central School 2018). In line with Khan's (2010) findings at St. Paul's School, Friends' Central believes in and cultivates academic exceptionalism in students; all students are expected to perform at the "honors" level in all of their courses.

Besides instilling academic superiority and ease discussing diverse topics in prep school students, curriculum is a key factor of college admission for all students. As previously stated, since twentieth century, one of the primary goals of prep schools was to admit students to equally prestigious colleges and universities where the process of forming students into the future elite class would continue. Friends' Central is no different from other prep schools when it comes to the importance on college admission, as evidenced by the college choices of past classes, described previously. High-ranking colleges and universities seek out students who have taken challenging classes in the core subjects—history, literature, foreign language, math, and science—and succeeded in those classes. Friends' Central's course offerings and rigor prepares students to be competitive applicants to top colleges.

While Friends' Central School does offer a wide array of rigorous academic courses in the classical subjects, the school also uses the curriculum to instill a distinct ethos in students. Interviewees stressed the importance of curriculum outside of the traditional subjects. Ms.

Beverly, the principal, shared, “We think about the subjects, English, math, science, history, foreign language, arts, athletics, and think of that at core. At Friend's Central what I think is different is yes, we think of those as core, but we also think of sexuality education, diversity, Quakerism, and wellness as core.” All students are required to complete two semesters of wellness courses in their first two years at Friends’ Central, including the Quaker School Life class in ninth grade. Thus, through the curricular offerings promote intellectual and social distinction, the curriculum also promotes values such as justice and equity, Quaker ideals, and physical and mental wellness.

EXTRA AND CO-CURRICULARS: CLUBS AND ATHLETICS

As illustrated in Chapter II, extracurriculars play a central role in the construction of students at an elite secondary school. Social theorists including Baltzel (1958), Cookson and Persell (1958), and Mills (1956), have attributed the importance of elite educational institutions to the maintenance of the upper class to social clubs. It is within these subcommunities of the institutions that students form bonds with their peers that they continue to capitalize on throughout their lives.

Clubs

While they do bond students, bringing together students with similar interests, clubs at Friends’ Central play a different role from those in the elite institutions of the mid-twentieth century, they promote inclusion, not exclusion. Many of the interviewees emphasized the importance of making students feel like they belong; part of “finding one’s place” at Friends’ Central is being a part of niche communities within the school. Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality

Education Coordinator, stated that extracurricular activities are an important way in which the school helps students to feel like they belong. He shared one anecdote of one student who, not finding a place among the other students, formed his own club.

There's a young man here who's a senior, who I just adore, and he's probably on the spectrum, and he has a really difficult time with socialization. But he's really fluent around music. Not so much performing, but talking about music, he loves music, and we've encouraged him over the years to create a music appreciation club. Which he has! And it's small, but the fact that every Friday...he comes to this room and three or four people show up and they listen to music together, that wouldn't necessarily happen in a different kind of school.

Many of the interviewees stressed the importance of students nurturing and growing their passions through their Friends' Central education. One way in which the school encourages them to do this is through extracurriculars. There are over fifty clubs listed on the school website and students are always encouraged to create a new club, as in the case of the music appreciation club described above.

Ms. Beverly, the principal, described that it is the student-invented clubs that demonstrate a Quaker education. She said, "There are some clubs that we can offer, which we know would be good, and educational, and fun. But when they come from the students they come from their hearts. They come from their souls, and that feels more authentic in a Quaker school." Students' ideas and passions are valued alongside what the faculty and administration thinks will be valuable for them. Extracurriculars at Friends' Central are not exclusionary; instead faculty and administrators understand them as one of the great avenues of inclusion.

Inclusion in clubs happens not only in the founding of, participation in, and subject of clubs, but also in their scheduling. The Upper School schedule is frequently in flux to accommodate the needs of both students and faculty, and in the past few years has begun to accommodate meeting time for clubs during the school day. Ms. Beverly, the principal, stated

There are breaks during the day because we need them. There are opportunities for clubs and for gatherings of students because we need to make that happen. We're committed to not just racial, religious, and socioeconomic diversity, but geographic diversity as well. So if you have all your clubs after school, who can come? Do they need to take SEPTA²² home? Can't have them before school. Who's going to come if you live far away and you have to get up at 5:30 to be here?

Setting aside time for clubs during the school day not only provides students and teachers with a break from high-intensity classes but also makes it so all students can be involved in clubs regardless of outside of school commitments. Unlike boarding schools in which students eat, sleep, attend school, and socialize all in the confines of one institution, day schools only have students for seven or eight hours of the day. Scheduling time for club meetings during those hours demonstrates Friends' Central's commitment inclusivity in those activities.

While Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Educator and Principal, emphasized the role of clubs in nurturing students' passions and helping them find their place in the student body, Ms. Beverly, the principal, also underlined that now colleges expect students to be involved in extracurriculars: "The colleges want to know, when you're applying, what did you do? How did you make a difference? What are your interests? And so, it feels much more like students don't have a choice. They have to have clubs." As demonstrated by Collins (1979), Cookson and Persell (1985), and Khan (2010), among others, prep school students spend much of their school career preparing to be competitive applicants for elite colleges and universities. As discussed previously, Friends' Central students are among those students. While colleges have always highly valued a student's academic performance, they now also emphasize extracurricular involvement. In a way, extracurriculars have become "co-curriculars." Ms. Beverly stated, "Some people would say clubs in schools are extracurricular, and I would tell you in this day and

²² SEPTA is the acronym for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority. Along with school buses and cars, students use SEPTA trains and buses to go to and from school and home.

time I would not say that. They're more co-curricular." At Friends' Central, clubs are an integral piece of the socialization process of students finding a sense of belonging at the school, and they are also a necessary part of a college application. Thus, similarly to the curriculum, club offerings and involvement promote prep school ideals and transform students into competitive applicants. However, as students engage with these clubs, at Friends' Central they are also being taught to value inclusion and to nurture their individual passions.

Athletics

Unlike curriculum and clubs, which may prepare students for a life in discord with Quaker educational ideals, sports themselves are perceived as directly contrary to Quakerism. Three of the interviewees talked somewhat extensively about athletics and one of the first things each one said on the topic was that people see sports and Friends schools as being "contradictory," in the words of Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher. However, Ruth, the Quaker Coordinator, whose son played soccer as a student at Friends' Central and now coaches at the school, disputed this perception: "A lot of people think, 'Quakers can't be competitive,' but it's not very true." Ms. Beverly, the principal said something similar and identified that it's not only competition that people think is contradictory to Quakerism, but physical contact. She said, "I think that most folks outside of Quaker schools...don't wonder, how you have soccer, swimming, softball, but struggle with things like lacrosse, football, some places, rugby, because of the contact."

Not only do Friends not have a problem with athletics and competition, but historically physical activity has been central to Quaker education. According to Farraday's (1984) history of the school, move in the 1920s from the urban location to the Wistar Morris estate was motivated by changing views on recreation time. The progressive education Country Day School

movement “asserted that the leisure and recreation time of boys and girls were just as important as their study time” (Farraday 1984:47). In alignment with this thinking, faculty at Friends’ Central pushed for a location where students had regular access to playing fields. Although the faculty in the 1920s may not have been suggesting that the school offer more violent sports like wrestling and lacrosse, physical education was important to the school’s overall educational offering. The three interviewees who discussed athletics expressed a similar conclusion: Friends’ Central’s mission is to nurture the whole child, an important part of that being the physical well-being of students.

The principal, the Quaker Coordinator, and the Quakerism and Spanish teacher did speak about ways in which athletics—or more often, the culture of athletics—could be contrary to Quakerism. They offered ways in which Friends’ Central, and the local sports league of Quaker schools of which it is a part, mitigate those challenges. Ms. Beverly, the principal, stated that being involved in a Quaker sporting event means bringing specific attention to how you treat your opponents and your own team. She elaborated,

How do you treat your opponent? How do you support one another on the team? You know, if we're [in a] tight game, got a tight basketball game, and it's 85 to 85, and I have the last shot, and I miss it...how does the team treat me because I missed that shot? You know, how do the fans treat me because I missed that shot? How does the opposing team treat me? What if there's an injury? What's my role as a fan?

Ms. Beverly describes that to answer these questions at a Friends school, those involved in athletics look to Quaker principles. She went on,

Quakers believe that there's some part of God in every person, and therefore...that person [who missed a shot] is worthy of being treated with respect, and dignity, and kindness, and being supported, and being celebrated, as opposed to teased, bullied, taken advantage of, being made the example.

At both Friends' Central and at the previous Friends' School she worked at, Ms. Beverly saw student athletes, parents, fans, and coaches acting in a way that is distinct from the prep sports culture.

However, this Quaker-informed behavior is not a given at Friends' schools. Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, articulated one of the key tensions at Friends' Central with athletics is teaching coaches to coach with a Quaker ethos.

One tension that is tough with upper school sports is that [there are] more and more non-Friends' Central faculty who are coaching the teams. And...the way you work with young people is so often different elsewhere than it is here. Coaches sometimes need to be guided in that process...about how you [coach] in a Friends school.

Across the country, at high school sporting events, parents are being arrested for misbehavior, students are bad-mouthing their opponents and sometimes their own teammates, and coaches act as bullies, instead of teachers. Ms. Beverly and Mark see the challenge at Friends' Central to continue to create a sports culture that nurtures students in the same way they are nurtured in the classroom or on stage. Mark, a former soccer and basketball coach at the school, described his mantra over the years. "When I teach, I coach. When I coach, I teach. There's this assumption when you go out and coach, kids should know what they're doing. No. You have to teach skills. You have to teach how to be a good teammate and how to work together as a group." At Friends' Central, like at a majority of high schools across the country, public and private alike, athletics are a central focus of the school. However, while Cookson and Persell (1985) describe athletics to be one of the metrics upon which prep schools base their reputations, at Friends' Central athletics are understood to be a part of the process of nurturing students. Friends' Central teachers, administrators, and coaches encourage students to succeed in athletics, as well as to be teammates and fans who recognizes the humanity in each person and treats them with respect.

Friends in High Places

By using the very structures of the school that prepare students to hold power, Friends' Central reframes the way in which students should relate to themselves and others.

Conclusion: What is Taught, Practiced, and Learned

During his interview, Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher ruminated on the distinctness of Friends' Central and posed the question that Quaker scholars and educators have labored with over the past hundred years as elite schools have risen to importance in the reproduction of the power elite.

Who are we? How are we different than other independent schools? I'm not sure all the time that we're a whole lot different, but I think when you get into the nitty gritty and into the weeds of who we are, if you wish ... we're always struggling with it. We're always laboring. We always want to grow and to change and it conflicts with the financial nature and the financial needs of the school, sometimes but not always.

Friends' Central is always grappling with how to remain faithful to its unique moral framework while operating as a private school. This distinct ideology of Quaker education centers the recognition that every person has a piece of the divine within them and thus should be treated with respect and dignity. The Quaker tradition also values simplicity, as outward appearance should not inhibit one's relationship with oneself, one's community, and with a higher power. However, Quaker schools are also high-achieving private schools that in many ways mirror the structures and functions of elite private schools. As demonstrated in the scholarship on the role of elite secondary schools in American society through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, prep schools prepare students to be in positions of power (Baltzell 1958; Cookson and Persell 1985; Domhoff 1967; Khan 2010; Kraushaar 1972; Mills 1956). Prep schools teach students how to think, act, and feel like the elite, and they form students into competitive applicants for prestigious colleges and universities at which this socialization continues. The experience of attending prep school is characteristic of the upper class, uniting these individuals and differentiating them from the rest of society. To compete with other schools for students and

remain financially stable, Quaker schools must, and want to, offer the same advantages as other prep schools including academic rigor and extracurricular activities, in order to attract students.

This tension between private school culture and function and Quaker educational ideology is widely noted in scholarship on Friends schools in the twentieth century and today; however, it often just that—noted, and not investigated further. In the 1940s, prominent Quaker scholar Howard Brinton (1940) expressed concern that Quaker schools were no more than costly alternatives to public schools, and if true, were even less democratic than the public schools (p. 110). In the twenty-first century as well, scholars of Quaker education have noted this tension. Betof (2011), Bryans (2000), and Kim (2011) report that the contradiction of being an elite private school that rejects wealth is a characterizing feature of Quaker schools. While these authors note that Friends schools struggle with their identity and reality as private schools, scholars of elite schools tend to write Quaker schools off as being outside the norms of prep schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Kraushaar 1972; James and Levin 1988). Cookson and Persell (1985) note, “In general [Quaker schools] have not tried to socialize their students for power and thus they appear in this study in a cameo role” (41). While the scholarship presented previously disputes this, the point is well taken that there is something that sets independent Quaker schools apart from traditional prep schools.

This study seeks to go beyond merely noting that Quaker schools are characterized by a core ideological tension to understand how school communities themselves contend with this contradiction. To get at this central inquiry, this study takes an in-depth look at one Philadelphia-area independent Quaker school, Friends’ Central School. This study draws on data from interviews with seven teachers and administrators, four of whom are Quaker, and all of whom

have long-standing relationships with the school as teachers, administrators, and some students and alumnae/i.

WHAT IS TAUGHT, WHAT IS PRACTICED

This thesis argues that Friends' Central School employs the very school structures that prepare students for power to instill in them the school's unique ethos with the goal that the students will embody this ideology in their future endeavors. In many ways, Friends' Central is not very different from peer prep schools: the curriculum is rigorous and expansive, clubs are numerous and provide leadership experience, and athletics are celebrated. Even beyond school structures, the importance of attending college is equally important at Friends' Central, and the architecture and leadership hierarchy unmistakably form part of a prep school when compared to the scholarship on elite schools (Cookson and Persell 1985; Khan 2010). However, what participants emphasized is that Friends' Central has a clear ethos, a North Star that guides the school morally.

This ethos is grounded in Quaker ideology and promotes the doctrines of equality, community, and peace, as well as the theory of continuing revelation and the practice and importance of silence. It is this ethos that Friends' Central faculty and administrators believe distinguishes the school from other private schools. Interviewees described that students learn, internalize, and practice this ethos by going through the process of attending school. Thus, students who start in the Upper School after two or three years in the Middle School have the ethos of the school, a Quaker ethos, "[oozing] out of their pores," as Mr. Vicente, the Sexuality Education Coordinator aptly phrased it. Participants raised the fact that new students must be

oriented to the school's ethos, which is primarily done through a ninth-grade course called Quaker School Life that address just that: how to be a student at a Quaker school.

Beyond the ninth-grade course, the primary structures through which Friends' Central teaches students the ethos of the school are the curriculum and extracurriculars. As previously discussed, it is these structures that prepare students for power in a prep school. However, at Friends' Central, the very curriculum that bolsters students' exceptionalism also includes wellness courses. Clubs look good on a college application, and also help students find their niche and explore their individual passions. Athletic success is highly valued, but so is treating others with compassion.

Interviewees indicated an awareness that the school teaches students more than the intended ethos, it also socializes students to be in power. In describing their goals for student success, participants often raise in passing that students will go on to hold leadership positions. While students' aspirations for power ought to be celebrated, teachers and administrators also hope that students will carry with them the ethos that they learned at Friends' Central. Teachers and faculty do not deny that the school plays the role of a traditional prep school in preparing students to go on to prestigious colleges and then positions of power; however, the students that Friends' Central sends into these positions are ideally students who recognize the importance of every person, students who know themselves and students whose first response is peacefulness. In this way, Friends' Central does its part to, as the vision statement professes, "peacefully transform the world."

WHAT IS LEARNED: IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis addresses both what is taught and what is practiced at Friends' Central School in terms of contending with the core contradiction in the operation of the school as an elite private school and a Quaker institution, though neglects what is learned from this. While Friends' Central teachers and administrators hope that students go out into the world carrying with them a Quaker, and distinctly Friends' Central, mentality, the data collected for this thesis does not decidedly demonstrate that students do so in actuality.

While this thesis does not address what students learn, a few participants did point to instances in which they experienced alumnae/i living out the ethos of Friends' Central. After describing values that he hoped students carry with them from their Friends' Central education, I asked Mr. Kelly if he sees alumnae/i embodying those values. He responded,

Absolutely, absolutely...I actually had lunch with a former student of mine [recently] who is now a professor at Wesleyan, and got his PhD from Stanford, and he kind of embodies that, what I would call that kind of quiet passion about his particular area of study. He is somebody who recognize the significance of working as part of a group as well.

This Friends' Central alumnus did go on to a prestigious university to for his PhD and now holds a position at an elite small liberal arts college. Moreover, Mr. Kelly highlights, the alumnus goes about his work with passion and with recognition of the importance of collaboration, both values Mr. Kelly attributes to a Friends' Central education.

Participants also noted that the embodiment of Quaker values goes beyond specifically Friends' Central; alumnae/i of Friends schools more generally carry out these values. Mark, the Quakerism and Spanish teacher, said of Quaker schools,

You will know them by their fruit...When you find out that someone has graduated from a Friends school, you say, "I knew it." Because there's something about that person that typically will say, for example once I learned that someone went to Friends' School Haverford,²³ I said, "That explains everything."

²³ Friends' School Haverford is an independent Quaker preschool-8 day school on the Main Line. It consistently sends a few graduates every year to Friends' Central for high school.

Mark went on to give an example of a ninth grader, a graduate of Friends' School Haverford, who embodies the ethos of Quaker school. He said,

He's so polite when he talks to me and he's so mature when he talks to me. And he would talk to me before I knew what his name was. I've never taught that kid a day, but there's something about going to a Friends school that then gives you this ... means of operating in the world that I think is different than many other places. Carry that ethos with you from [author] Paul Lacey if you wish.

This young student acts and interacts in such a way that, despite not having taught him, Mark knew he was the product of a Friends school. As Mr. Vicente put it, the ethos "oozes out of their pores." From the limited descriptions participants gave of alumnae/i of Friends' Central, and of Quaker schools more generally, it seems that schools succeed in producing students who carry with them and embody a Quaker ethos. However, this data is very limited.

To truly evaluate if Friends' Central succeeds at graduating students who carry with them the ethos of Friends' Central, especially those students who do go on to hold leadership and prestigious positions in society, it would be necessary to collect data on alumnae/i. Though outside the scope of this thesis, future research could be done of the graduates of Friends' Central School to assess to what extent they believe in and embody the ethos of the school. It would also be valuable to extend this study beyond Friends' Central to other similar Quaker secondary schools to see what factors shape the way each school contends with the core tension between private school ideology and Quaker values.

Based on interviews with seven senior faculty members and administrators at Friends' Central School, it is evident that those who have been a part of the school community for many years have been grappling and will continue to grapple with the contradictions of Quaker schools. This grappling is, in itself, an important exercise for faculty, administrators, and students alike who desire to live out values that contradict mainstream social norms, such as

putting kindness and peace at the forefront of thought and action. Peacefully transforming the world cannot be done without laboring with contradiction.

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Appendix

LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. Tell me about how you came to be here.²⁴**
2. What is your role at Friends' Central?
3. What is distinctive about Friends' Central?
4. How is Friends' Central similar or different from other Quaker (secondary schools)?
5. How is Friends' Central similar or different from other independent schools on the Main Line?
- 6. What lessons would you like people to leave here with?**
- 7. Are there any negative lessons you think the school teaches?**
8. What are Friends' Central values?
9. What values does the school instill in students?
10. How does the school transmit these values?
- 11. Do you think the schools succeeds at upholding and putting into practice these values?**
12. Do you see any gaps between what the school preaches and what it practices?
- 13. How have the schools' values or practices evolved since you [started working here] [were a student here]?**
- 14. What are some of things that make Friends' Central a Quaker school?**
15. How would you describe the Quaker educational philosophy? Generally, if you have a sense, or at Friends' Central?
- 16. How does the Upper School practice Quakerism?**

²⁴ The bold font indicates essential questions that I asked most, if not all, of the interviewees.

17. Can you tell me some important school traditions?

18. What is the role of extracurriculars at FCS? In students' lives?

19. Can you give me an example of what difference in social class may look like at FCS?

20. What are faculty/staff conversations about diversity? Social class, specifically?

21. What are student conversations about diversity? Social class?

22. How does Friends' Central/how do you define student success?

23. How does FCS/you define success for students after graduation? 10 years after/in the workforce?

24. What are some of the hot topics that get discussed? Things people complain about?