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Invisible Students: A Case Study of Friendless Students

During the First Year of Junior High

Rachel E. Neeley

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Ramona Cutri  
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## ABSTRACT

### Invisible Students: A Case Study of Friendless Students During the First Year of Junior High

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Master of Arts

This is a case study that investigates the experiences of eight friendless seventh grade students as they transition from elementary school to junior high. In an effort to examine the wide-range of experiences of friendless students, I explored and compared the experiences of students who have high social self-efficacy and students who have low self-efficacy.

Each student was interviewed two times and both interviews were analyzed using a priori codes of when and where students felt isolated and distressed. The interviews were also analyzed using an open coding method looking for emergent codes.

The study highlights and illustrates what each student expresses about their experiences in terms of isolation, friendship, and belonging. The cases show that peer group disruption, introversion and extroversion, the role of the adult at school, and family dynamics affect the experiences of the participants. Findings of the study suggest that schools need to plan and organize different types of spaces for friendless students to meet and connect with peers.

Keywords: social self-efficacy, transition to secondary school, transition to middle school, friendless

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Students 12 to 13 years old are in a vulnerable time of life as they are transitioning from childhood to adolescence. Fitting in, belonging and making friends are significant issues for students in this period of life given the intense developmental changes that occur over a short period of time (Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006). For many students, the transition to junior high in seventh grade can exacerbate these feelings. Students may lose their feeling of autonomous control and may become more insecure and more sensitive to social evaluation by others (Bandura, 1997).

The transition out of elementary school is an important time (Berndt & Mekos, 1995) and can be difficult for students for many reasons (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). As students are transitioning out of elementary school and into secondary school, adolescents must re-establish their sense of belonging, social self-efficacy and networks of new peers with multiple teachers.

Disruption in peer group is difficult for students at any age. However, it can be particularly stressful for students as they leave an elementary school where they often feel a sense of security. By the time students are in their last year of elementary school, they have had the opportunity to acclimate to the elementary school structure and environment. Because of this time to adjust to the school structure, elementary school students feel comfortable with the school environment, the peers in their class, and the adults in the school. Typically, several elementary schools funnel into one junior high, so students not only have to handle multiple teachers, lockers, and passing periods for the first time, but many students have to reestablish their peer group the same as if they had moved (Hamburg, 1997). Past elementary friendships

may dissolve as students meet new peers and make new friends (Berndt, Hawkins & Jiao, 1999). Some researchers have stated that the transition to secondary schools is stressful because young adolescents are not developmentally ready for multiple teachers and a larger school (Berndt & Mekos, 1995). This may explain why it can be a very demanding time for students as they are trying to find their place in a new environment.

### **Friendships and Friendlessness**

Friendships become particularly important during early adolescence. During adolescence, students start to develop an identity partially based on their connections and communications with their peers (Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004). Friendships are important. One friend is better than no friends. Having one or two friends is more important in terms of sense of belonging than being popular in school.

Reciprocal friendships are friendships in which both people involved recognize the relationship as a friendship. Students who do not have any reciprocal friendships can be labeled as friendless (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Reciprocated friendships in early adolescence have been shown to positively influence students' adjustment. Students without reciprocated friendships (i.e. friendlessness) describe higher levels of emotional, social, and academic distress. Friendless students also report low levels of self-worth (e.g., Bukowski, Laursen, & Hoza, 2010; Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Lapp, 2002; Wentzel, Barry, & Caldwell, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Clearly, it is important that both school personnel and parents are sensitive and responsive to students during the stressful junior high transition (Martínez, Tolga Aricak, Graves, Peters-Myszak, & Nellis, 2011). Many different aspects of junior high may be stressful for individual students (Akos, 2002) and many educators and schools have implemented a

variety of programs to help students transition smoothly. However, questions remain about what the transitional experience is like from the perspective of individual students. For example, we don't know what is especially difficult, meaningful, or helpful for a friendless student during this transitional time.

Research shows that students with reciprocated friendships are more pro-social, autonomous, emotionally caring, selfless, and less aggressive than those who do not have such friendships (Aboud & Mendelson, 1996). However, there is still much to be learned about how friendless students navigate junior high as they transition out of elementary school.

There are many different types of friendless students. One particularly interesting potential variation in the characteristics of friendless students is the varying levels of social self-efficacy. Students with high social self-efficacy respond differently to difficult social situations than students with low self-efficacy. Students in early adolescence with low social self-efficacy are reported to have higher levels of anxiety (Smári, Pétursdóttir, & Þorsteinsdóttir, 2001) and greater difficulty with making friends as compared to students with high social self-efficacy. One friendless student might be lonely and isolated while another student feels confident and enjoys solitude or finds social acceptance in communities outside of school or with adults. In order for educators to support and help friendless students during the transition to junior high, more information is needed about when and where friendless students feel the most isolated and distressed at school.

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of junior high transition from the perspective of friendless students in the first year of junior high. In an effort to examine the wide-range of experiences of friendless students, I explored and compared the experiences of

students who have high social self-efficacy and students who have low self-efficacy. I compared the differences and similarities across the individual student experiences in order to better understand each student's experience.

### **Research Question**

The research questions that frame this study are:

- When and where do friendless students feel the most isolated and distressed while at school?
- What are the differences in the experiences between students in relation to their friend experience at school? Specially, what are the differences in experience between students with high and low self-efficacy?

These research questions help me examine the nuanced experiences of friendless students. They also have the potential to help educators more deeply understand possible differences between friendless experiences. Additionally, better understanding of when and where school is difficult for friendless students could potentially better inform teachers, counselors, and parents. A case study design allows me to investigate and illustrate what each student experienced in terms of isolation, friendship, and belonging during their transitional year into secondary school.

### **Definition of Terms**

In order to conduct a study of friendless students, first it is important to operationalize certain terms. A reciprocal friendship is a friendship that is recognized by both parties involved as a friendship (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). A friendless student is a student who does not have any reciprocal friendships at school as identified by a best friend nomination (Richards & Rice, 1981).

Two other terms that are important for this study are long-term residents and social self-efficacy. For the purpose of this study, a long-term resident is a student who has lived in the town for at least three years. Social self-efficacy is an individual's beliefs in his or her ability to navigate social situations.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

#### The Problem of Friendlessness in Adolescence

Many adolescents develop close friendships during puberty (Pellegrini & Blatchford, 2000). As they develop friendships, they have occasions to expand social skills and feel social support. Conversely, friendless children and adolescents spend less time interacting with peers and can become isolated from peer groups.

Friendless adolescents can have difficulties at school if they feel excluded or invisible. In a review of studies across Europe and the United States, about 30% of adolescents reported moderate problems associated with isolation and about 10% reported serious problems, specifically problems with depression and anxiety (Chazan, Laing, Davis, & Phillips, 1998). Isolation becomes a problem when it leads to the rejection of the adolescent. This social rejection can cause adolescents to fear advocating for their needs or becoming apprehensive in expressing their opinions. When an adolescent is isolated and rejected they can experience behavioral and emotional problems such as depression and anxiety (Marchant et al., 2007), which can also affect academic performance.

**Variation in the nature of isolation.** Although early studies of social isolation mainly considered isolation as a singular phenomenon (e.g., Pekarik, Prinz, Liebert, Weintraub, & Neale, 1976; Rubin, Daniels-Beirness, & Hayvren, 1982), increasing curiosity in this topic has encouraged a variety of perspectives on the nature of isolation. Some adolescents can be described as actively isolated. These students are those who are intentionally (actively) avoided by peers who do not want to interact with them. Other adolescents can be described as passively withdrawn. The passively withdrawn or socially disinterested subtype of isolation describes

adolescents who do not have a strong desire to participate in social interaction, even though they are not fearful of interacting with their peers. Passively withdrawn or socially disinterested adolescents may not find socializing a satisfying activity and tend to prefer solitary activities.

Sometimes one subtype of socially disinterested students is labeled as a kind of introversion (Johansson, 2007). An introvert is someone who becomes emotionally drained when being around large groups of people or being around people they do not know. It takes emotional energy for an introvert to be engaged in social life and form new friendships (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). In contrast, an extrovert is someone who is energized by being around groups of people. They typically like big groups and enjoy meeting new people (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975). These personality variables of introversion and extroversion have been shown to impact a multiplicity of behaviors (e.g., Becker & Matteson, 1961; Eysenck, 1965, 1971; Fouts & Click 1979; Lynn, 1959) and could be related to peer interaction and isolation.

Another subtype of isolated adolescents is called passive-anxious. These are adolescents who have the desire to initiate social contact and interaction, but are too frightened or nervous to do so. These adolescents may be purposefully seeking isolation as a way to ease social anxiety.

In sum, adolescents may experience social fear and anxiety or they may have a preference for solitude (Johansson, 2007). Passively withdrawn adolescents prefer to be alone even if they could conceivably be included with peers. Actively isolated adolescents want to be included but are excluded from the camaraderie of peers (Johansson, 2007; Younger, 1993).

Certain adolescents are socially withdrawn at school, but not at home or other outside of school activities. Seclusion, avoidance, and difficulties with making friends often characterize isolated adolescents (Johansson, 2007). Socially withdrawn adolescents are usually not popular with their peers (Johansson, 2007). When these adolescents are rejected by their peers it may be

because they lack experience in social situations which leads them to become even more isolated. Additionally, students may have experienced past occurrences of being rejected, which can cause them to become even more vulnerable. Personality traits, as well as aspects in the school environment, contribute to social withdrawal. The interactions between personality traits and the school environment can also have a major impact (Johansson, 2007).

**Social self-efficacy as variation.** Characteristics of social self-efficacy are another way in which friendlessness varies. Albert Bandura originated the term *self-efficacy* to label a person's belief that he or she can complete a task (Bandura, 1989). Although sensitive to the environment and social factors of behavior, Bandura emphasized the individual cognitive aspects of human behavior. Self-efficacy is measured on a scale from high to low (Schunk, 2000). If people have high self-efficacy they believe that they have the capacity to do a given task well. If they have low self-efficacy, they do not believe they will be able to complete the given task.

Social self-efficacy is a precise application of self-efficacy theory. Social self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her capacity to participate in the social interactions required to initiate and sustain interpersonal relationships (Smith & Betz, 2000). This consists of behaviors such as navigating social conflict, interacting with new people, being assertive in social situations, fostering romantic relationships, making friends, and interacting with groups of people. Social self-efficacy refers to person's confidence in their ability to initiate social interaction and make new friendships (Gecas, 1989).

Self-efficacy beliefs are also associated with the extent to which people are willing to engage in a task or an activity, and of their fortitude when performing a task (Pajares, 2006). When students have low social self-efficacy, and believe they do not have the skills to engage in a social task they are less likely to try to engage in that task. Therefore, students with high social



self-efficacy respond differently to difficult social situations than students with low self-efficacy. Additionally, students in early adolescence with low social self-efficacy have higher levels of anxiety (Smári et al., 2001) and have a greater difficulty with making friends as compared to students with high social self-efficacy.

### **Schools and Adolescent Development**

Adolescents undergo a variety of physical changes related to puberty and adolescence (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). Junior high or middle school is a time when students start to develop an awareness of themselves and how they fit into the larger world of school and peers. They are more self-conscious about popularity, how they look, what others think of them, and their social standing.

Because schools are places of learning and social interaction, they can support healthy development for adolescents. Previous research has indicated that an environment that encourages positive social interaction and support from teachers, parents, and peers has a direct positive influence on an adolescents' life contentment (Danielsen, Samdal, Hetland, & Wold, 2009). However, some adolescents are more socially vulnerable at school because they are isolated or socially withdrawn. One of the largest threats to the welfare of adolescents is the psychosocial difficulties that surface from the experience of being bullied and actively isolated (Rigby, 2003).

### **School Environment Mismatch to Adolescent Development**

Adolescents are going through puberty and various other social, emotional, and psychological adjustments (Eccles et al., 1993). They desire autonomy from parents, teachers and other adults in their life (Buchanan, Eccles, & Becker, 1992; Steinberg, 1990). The concern for social acceptance grows as they worry about forming their identity and beginning romantic

relationships (Brown, 1990). Adolescents become more inwardly focused and self-conscious. At this time of life, adolescents are also developing the ability to engage in more abstract and cognitive tasks (Brown, 1990; Katchadourian, 1990).

Eccles et al. (1993) proposed that these developments in adolescents are connected to the change in the classroom and school structure claiming that the environments they encounter when they move to middle school or junior high do not meet the students' developmental needs. Their environment needs to be intellectually challenging, safe, and able to meet their developmental needs of self-esteem, belonging, and autonomy (Blyth, Simmons, & Bush, 1978). Because these conditions are often not met, traditional secondary schools are developmentally unsuitable for many adolescents. Because of this "mismatch" concerning what adolescents need and the structure of secondary classrooms, students show diminished academic success and motivation (Eccles et al., 1993).

The decrease in student motivation is connected to the transition to middle school or junior high. This seems to be a consequence of the school structure and environment that does not always fit the needs of adolescents (Hunt, 1975). The term *stage environment fit* was devised to define and claim that the fit between the developmental needs of students and the school environment is fundamental to the academic success and motivation of students (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). When an environment is receptive to the needs of students it encourages increases in achievement and motivation. On the other hand, Eccles et al. (1993) indicated that, "the environmental changes experienced by students as they transitioned to middle school, were found to be especially harmful." In many secondary schools, the emphasis is placed on competition, the ability to self-assess, and social comparison. There are diminished occasions for students to form close relationships with adults during a period when adolescents especially need

adult relationships beyond the adult relationships they have at home. There is also increased attention given to lower level cognitive tasks at a time in the student's life when he/she needs to have more decision making power (Eccles et al., 1993).

### **Elementary to Secondary School Transition**

The transition from elementary school to secondary school can cause additional difficulties for adolescents. The transition involves major changes in how elementary school students are educated (Barber & Olsen, 2003). Students in their first year at a middle school or junior high have difficulty finding their classes, using their lockers, and adjusting to a larger school (Elias, 2002). Many students become anxious about bullies, the amount of increasing homework, and their ability to make friends (Akos, 2002; Elias, 2002). Throughout elementary and middle school, healthy development takes place for most adolescents, but 25% to 50% of developing adolescents do not experience the same positive social development. These adolescents are at risk of struggling both academically and socially (Elias, 2002).

Making the transition to secondary school also may cause anxiety in adolescents. This is additionally complicated by changes in social and emotional maturity, an increased emphasis on peer relationships, the development of higher order thinking skills, and puberty (Cauley & Jovanovich, 2006). During the move from elementary school to secondary school, many adolescents also show significant increases in psychological and social difficulty. During this transitional time, referrals to mental health facilities increase as students are striving to redefine who they are in an environment that has become more challenging and less nurturing. Experimenting with smoking, drugs and alcohol increases and some students start to have problems with attendance and low self-esteem (Elias, 2002).

Simmons, Burgeson, and Carlton-Ford (1987) conducted a landmark study looking at the effect of major life transitions on early adolescents. In this longitudinal study, the researchers tracked adolescents as they transitioned from sixth to seventh grade in two different school districts. The participants were each examined several separate times throughout the course of the study to establish his or her level of development (Simmons et al., 1987). Three dependent variables were studied: self-esteem, grade-point average, and participation in extracurricular activities. Major life changes were considered transition variables and were assessed in five categories: school change, pubertal change, early dating, geographic mobility, and major family disruption.

The findings of this study showed that there was an inverse relationship between the dependent variables of GPA, participation in extracurricular activities, self-esteem and the individual transition variables (Simmons et al., 1987). Particularly, the findings suggested that entrance into secondary school alone had a substantial negative impact on girls in connection with extracurricular involvement and self-esteem. For boys, substantial negative effects were found in connection to GPA and extracurricular involvement. GPA was determined to be the most reactive to a range of transitional variables. In every instance, GPA was negatively impacted in all five categories. As one of the only longitudinal projects about school transition, this study made a strong case that there is a correlation between major life changes and a decline in student achievement. The study warns of negative outcomes for adolescents who go through multiple transitions at the same time.

**School environment.** The school environment is an important factor when considering student academic achievement and motivation during the transition to secondary school. One of the most significant changes to the school structure and environment that students must adapt to

is the design of the school day. In elementary school students typically have one teacher who they stay with for the majority of the day and who teaches them all content areas (Weldy, 1991). Elementary schools generally have nurturing and compassionate teachers that are more focused on the students' ability to finish a task rather than their ability to get the right answer (Alspaugh, 1998). Students walk with their class, in a straight line when the students go to lunch or elective classes. The structure of elementary school is built on stability, order, and routine. For six or seven years, many students succeed both academically and socially with this high level of adult supervision and support.

In a secondary school, the building is typically significantly larger. As students transition to secondary school, they are worried about following the rules, getting lost, and the growing amount of homework (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Many students begin to worry about physical safety as they enter secondary school (Akos, 2002; Elias, 2002). Students must also face changing in locker rooms, lockers, and changing classes without adult supervision for the first time. They are in the same school with students who come from many different elementary schools, and attend classes with students they have not met before. Students in their first year at a secondary school often consider themselves the least important person in terms of social hierarchy. They are also regularly teased and bothered. In some instances, students in their first year of secondary school become victims of bullying (Elias, 2002).

In most secondary schools classes change every 40 to 50 minutes. Students try to open their lockers, trundle through hallways packed with students, and attempt to get to one of their many classes in just a few minutes. The students must immediately navigate a much larger school, become more organized, and deal with increased academic demands (Midgley,

Anderman, & Hicks, 1995). Because of these factors, student stress and anxiety often increase while academic achievement is more likely to decrease (Alspaugh, 1998; Daniels, 2005).

Since the organization of secondary school often does not fit with the academic development of many seventh grade students, student achievement declines (Akos & Galassi, 2004). When students reach junior high or middle school, the improvements they have made in elementary school often decrease and become stagnant. Many studies reveal that transition to secondary school has a profound influence on student academic achievement and motivation (e.g., Akos & Galassi, 2004; Alspaugh, 1998; Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Eccles et al. (1993) assert that school and classroom environments in secondary schools are responsible for these regressions. Other school related factors that might impact student academic achievement during the shift from elementary school consist of disconnection to the school community, classes segmented into specific subjects, ability grouping and tracking, and an increased workload.

**Classroom structure.** Most elementary schools have one teacher who teaches students in all subject areas. Most secondary schools are organized very differently from elementary schools. Middle school and junior high students usually have one teacher for each subject. Teachers in secondary school typically place importance on control, regulation, and discipline (Brophy & Evertson, 1978). Middle level students typically encounter fewer positive relationships with their teachers than they experienced in elementary school (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1988). Content becomes the focus of instruction. Students receive smaller amounts of small group instruction; instead, teachers employ a “whole-class task organization” (Rounds & Osaki, 1982). Secondary teachers also more often use the custom of trading papers to be graded by peers (Gulickson, 1985). Having one primary teacher, as experienced in elementary classes, not only helps students feel a sense of belonging within the classroom, but also provides

a higher likelihood that the teacher will notice and help when an isolated student is struggling socially.

### **Summary**

In summary, early adolescence is a difficult time full of physical and emotional change. Students struggle to gain more autonomy and define themselves as individuals. Being a friendless adolescent adds an additional level of difficulty. Friendless students can feel isolated and have difficulties in school without the support that they need. The transition to junior high presents difficulties for all adolescents. However, disruption of peer group, change in school and classroom structure, and a less nurturing environment make the transition from elementary school especially difficult for friendless students.

Despite the difficulties inherent in friendlessness, students with high social self-efficacy may respond to the difficult social experiences junior high school presents differently than students with low social self-efficacy. For all students experiencing friendlessness, schools, teachers, administrators and parents must find better ways to support and reach out to help these students. More information is needed about when and where friendless students feel the most alone and anxious in order for schools to be able to support and ameliorate the school experiences and outcomes for friendless students.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method**

This exploratory case study uses multiple cases to examine how friendless seventh grade students experience their first year of junior high school. A case study design allowed me to explore in more depth, and describe what each student experienced in terms of isolation, friendship, and belonging at school. I also looked at themes across cases to discover similarities and differences between students' experiences, especially differences between students with high social self-efficacy as compared with students with low social self-efficacy.

### **Context**

This study took place in a western U.S. suburban junior high school. The school had about 950 students in grades 7-9. Students from four public elementary schools and several charter schools funnel into the junior high, so students are meeting many new people during their seventh grade year. School personnel are aware of how difficult it can be for seventh graders to transition to junior high and have worked to create institutional responses and supports. For example, the school has a special day before the official first day of school just for seventh graders. They practice opening their lockers, meet teachers, move from class to class, and eat lunch in the cafeteria. School leaders also have a back-to-school night. Seventh graders are also in their English class for two periods a day to help students ease into the new schedule. This reduces their number of teachers by one and it also gives the seventh graders a sort of home base. Additionally, counselors in the counseling office offer a friendship group for new students and students who struggle socially.

I am interested in the experience of seventh grade friendless students as they transition from elementary school to junior high, especially those who are long-term residents of Grapevine



(pseudonym) who have seemingly had the opportunity to create close friendships during their elementary experiences. In an effort to better understand variation in the friendless experience, I include friendless students with high and low levels of social self-efficacy.

### **Participant Selection Measures**

Because I was a teacher at the school, I knew that the counseling department at Grapevine Junior High (pseudonym) formed a friendship group each year for new students and students who are seen to struggle socially. The group is made up of students and counselors. About once a month the group meets during lunch. In order to get more information about which students would benefit from being a part of the friendship group, each seventh grader completed a survey (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey) in his or her assigned English class. For the purposes of this study, I added questions to the counseling office survey about social self-efficacy. I used the information from the friendship group survey to select my participants.

Friendlessness was my first selection criteria. The survey asked each student to identify the “three best friends who you hang out with at school.” I went through each survey to identify the students who received no friend nominations. Students who received no nominations from peers can be considered isolates and for this study I classified them as “friendless” (Richards & Rice, 1981).

Because I was interested in looking at students with a range of social self-efficacy, the second part of the survey used the seven question social self-efficacy portion of Muris’s (2001) Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C). This scale measures adolescents’ self-assessments of their ability to negotiate social situations and produce successful social interactions. The scale is specifically designed for children and adolescents ages 12 to 18.

Many students who are brand new to the school and the community did not receive any friend nominations because they are new, so only the experiences of long-term residents were considered for this study. The survey also asked students how long they have lived in the area. Students who reported living in Grapevine for at least 3 years qualified to be included in the selection group.

### **Participant Selection Criteria**

Eight students were invited to participate in the study based on selection criteria and the purposeful sampling criterion. All final participants were friendless (having received no friend nominations) and have lived in Grapevine for at least three years, so as not to be considered new to the community. Four of these participants rated high on the social self-efficacy scale and four students rated low on the scale. I also selected both boys and girls in my study; two girls and two boys with high social self-efficacy and two girls and two boys with low social-self efficacy. This created a quadrant of criterion based on gender and self-efficacy in order to explore differences in friendlessness across these variables.

I went through each survey generating a list of students who did not receive any friend nominations. Out of a total of 323 seventh graders, 53 were friendless (28 boys and 25 girls). I then looked at each of those students' surveys and eliminated any students who were new to the community (having lived in the community for less than three years). Eliminating students who were relatively new to the community brought the total number of friendless students to 25. I took the list of 25 students and eliminated any students who were currently in my class. I then looked at the social self-efficacy scores for the remaining students on the list. Students with a score of 30 or higher were considered to have high social self-efficacy and students with a score of 21 or lower were considered to have low social self-efficacy. I generated four lists of students

according to my selection criterion. I generated two lists of male students; one list of friendless male students who have high social self-efficacy and one list of male students who have low self-efficacy. I also generated two lists of female students; one list of friendless female students who have high social self-efficacy and one list of female students who have low self-efficacy.

A total of 19 students qualified as friendless according to my selection criteria. I began contacting the students and parents of the students who meet the selection criteria starting with the highest and lowest social self-efficacy scores. The students and parents who are willing to participate in the study became my participants. I contacted the parents of the students with the four highest (two boys and two girls) and four lowest (two boys and two girls) self-efficacy scores. I did not have any students or parents decline to participate in the study. As my purposeful sample criterion requires a total of eight participants, the first eight sets of students and parents that I contacted became the participants in the study. Table 1 shows demographic information about each of the participants. All names have been changed for anonymity.

Table 1

*Participant Information*

	Boys			
	Lance	Tyler	Michael	Evan
Age	13	12	12	12
Number of Years in Community	8	9	12	12
Social Self-Efficacy Score	40	38	21	18
Self-Efficacy Score Considered High or Low?	High	High	Low	Low
	Girls			
	Lori	Kylie	Tina	Hannah
Age	12	12	11	12
Number of Years in Community	9	8	12	3
Social Self-Efficacy Score	31	31	21	13
Self-Efficacy Score Considered High or Low?	High	High	Low	Low

## **Consent and Assent**

As I emailed or called the parents of each of the possible participants, I explained that I was doing research on the students' experience during the transitional seventh grade year. In Appendix B I have included a script for an initial parent email contact or phone call contact. I also talked with students to obtain verbal assent. After I obtained verbal assent and consent, I arranged a time to meet with each student and parent. When I met with the students and parents we signed consent and assent forms, exchanged email addresses, talked about the best way to communicate with one another, and I answered questions. In Appendix C I have included a copy of the parental consent and participant assent forms.

**My role.** During the time of the study, I taught seventh and ninth grade English at the school where the study took place. I also conducted all the interviews. I chose students in other teachers' classes as opposed to students in my own classes as to limit my role in the participants' school life. I was at the school and saw the participants, but I was not in the teacher or evaluator role for any of the participants. Additionally, I did not identify or talk about the participants with people at my school, nor did I discuss the particulars of my study with other teachers or faculty members.

**Confidentiality.** In order to provide a context of relative anonymity, I communicated with participants through email and met in the counseling office after school, so their participation in the study was not apparent to other students or teachers at school. I sent reminders through email and sent students reminders at school. Some of the participants chose to speak with me outside of our interviews, but I did not initiate conversations. If students did not want other students to know they were part of the study, students chose to not interact with me at all except for during the interviews.

Because the information I collected in the two interviews is sensitive and highly personal I did not share the information from the interviews with anyone at the school. I was vigilant about protecting the students' confidentiality and privacy. All interview transcripts were stored on a password protected non-public computer. I involved the students' parents when I communicated with students to set-up interview times. Throughout the entire interview process, I kept the lines of communication open with parents through emails and phone calls. Parents felt comfortable asking questions and raising concerns.

Because the participants could have felt uncomfortable as they thought and talked about experiences of loneliness or social difficulty, I had the seventh grade counselor present during all the interviews as the only other adult at the school involved in any way. The counselor was then very aware of the study and capable of helping each student. The need did not arise for the counselor to meet with any of the participants individually.

### **Data Sources**

There are two primary data sources for this study, which are two digitally recorded and transcribed semi-structured interviews with each of the individual participants. Additionally, systematic participant observations and field notes were also used for context and verification purposes. The final data source was the reciprocal friend nomination portion of the survey that was administered again at the end of the school year in May. This survey was given so I could determine if participants developed any reciprocal friendships throughout the school year. I interviewed each participant two times during the school year, including a context interview and followed by a picture interview. Both of these interviews were semi-structured in nature and focused on the issues of friendship, belonging, and isolation.

Before each interview, I emailed each student and carbon copied the student's parent to schedule the interview time. I sent a reminder email to each student and carbon copied the parent the day before the interview took place. The counseling office has a conference room that is out of view from other students and all interviews took place in that conference room. Before each interview started I explained again that I was going to tape record the interviews and assured students that I would not share this information with anyone from the school and that real names would not be used in any reporting. I also encouraged students to be honest and encouraged students to talk about issues and experiences that they considered important.

**Context interview.** The first interviews took place in October, toward the beginning of the school year. This initial context interview allowed me to establish the specific context and background information for each student. I was able to get to know each student generally, understand their feelings about school and friends, and understand their transition to junior high (see Appendix D for a list of questions). This interview was intended to establish an understanding of past friendship experiences as well as insight into each specific case context. The context interviews lasted between about twenty to ninety minutes.

**Picture interview.** The second interviews took place in January and February. For this interview I used relevant pictures that I took of the specific school as well as, schooling in general to engage the students in talking about their school experiences. I used the information from the students during the context interviews to decide what pictures I would take. I also used information from my experience as a teacher to decide exactly what pictures I brought to the interview. I used the same pictures in each interview, such as: lunch room, lockers, school dance, crowded classroom, hallway, bathroom, locker room, gym, busses, front office, field behind the school, and counseling office.

During the interview the student and I looked at each picture one at a time and talked about the ideas and feelings elicited when they thought about the place shown in the picture. If necessary, I used prompts to ask each student to tell me about their feelings and experiences with the picture (see Appendix D for a list of prompts). Students were free to direct the interview, spending as much or as little time on each picture as they wanted. Students could pass on discussing a picture that they didn't have any feelings or experiences about. This interview allowed me to explore when and where these friendless students felt the most isolated or distressed at school, as well as general information about their experiences with peers throughout the year.

**Field notes and observations.** Additional observations were systematically noted as I was collecting data during the whole school year. Because I was a teacher at the school where I was collecting data, I saw the participants in the hallway, at dances, and at lunch. I also heard students or other teachers talking about the participants. I took field notes as I observed, interacted, or heard about the participants. I also informally communicated with the parents of the participants throughout the study. I recorded my field notes starting once I obtained consent and assent and continued to take field notes throughout the entire school year. These field notes were used to help understand the interviews and build each case.

**End-of-year survey.** At the end of the school year in May, the friendship survey, without the social self-efficacy questions, was administered to the entire seventh grade again. I then used the same reciprocal friend nomination process as was used with the initial survey to determine if the participants were friendless at the end of the year or if they had gained reciprocal friendships at the end of the school year.

## Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed by experienced, hired transcriptionists. I replaced student names with pseudonyms. Analysis began with the first round of data collection (context interviews), consisting of transcripts from eight interviews, one interview for each student. I began data analysis by reading the interview transcripts as I listened to the audio recording. I read each transcript again and divided them into units of analysis. I looked at each thought expressed by the student as a unit of analysis. In order to address the first research question, I read, reread and coded the data using the two a priori codes of when and where students feel isolated and distressed. I coded all context interviews for these two a priori codes.

After the first round of interviews I established inter-rater reliability by having a colleague who was not at the school read the blinded data for instances where the students express when and where they felt distressed and isolated. I repeated the process of coding the data using the two a priori codes and establishing inter-rater reliability for the second set of interviews (picture interviews). I read the transcripts as I listened to the audio recording, reread the transcripts and divided the transcripts into units of analysis, coded the transcripts for when and where, and established inter-rater reliability by having a colleague who did not work at the school read the coded data.

Once all interviews were conducted, transcribed, and coded for the two a priori codes of when and where students feel isolated and distressed, I employed an open coding method. This open coding method was used in order to analyze for my second research question: what are the differences in the experiences between students in relation to their friend experience at school? I read and reread the data until themes emerged (Creswell, 2008). I clearly defined all themes that emerge from the data. Of the 14 emergent themes, 8 appeared across all cases and 6 appeared in



2 or more cases. I used this open coding method for all 16 interviews (8 context interviews and 8 picture interviews). As new themes emerged from the data I revisited the interviews that had already been coded to ensure that all initial open codes were identified. When new themes emerged as I coded later interviews, I recoded the previous data looking for evidence of the new themes.

In order to establish inter-rater reliability for this round of analysis, I again had the same colleague read the coded data. After we both looked at the coded data we discussed what we found and how we defined the themes. This iterative coding process eventually achieved saturation when no new themes emerged. A total of fourteen themes emerged from the data and are listed in Table 2 below along with the two a priori codes. A table with an example of each code for each participant can be found in Appendix E.

After I collected and coded both interviews from each student, I analyzed each participant individually looking for when and where they felt most isolated and distressed as well as other issues related to friendship and belonging. I defined broad categories to describe the patterns in the data within each case. I also used the field notes I collected to help build a case for each student. Each student case was built with the specific examples of each theme and with attention to the relevant contextual characteristics for each case (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003).

After establishing and analyzing individual cases, overall themes of similarities and differences between the cases were then identified. Looking at each case individually and across all the cases, I addressed the original research questions: When and where do friendless students feel the most isolated and distressed while at school? What are the differences in the experiences between students in relation to their friend experience? Specially, what are the differences in experience between students with high and low self-efficacy?

Table 2

*Codes, Definitions, and Examples*

Code	Definition	Example from Data
Where (negative place)	place that causes isolation, discomfort, or distress	I don't mind the eighth graders, but ninth graders are like big and scary, so it's kinda like I avoid trying to go in the ninth grade hall as much.
When (negative times)	time of day that causes isolation, discomfort, or distress	I hate the passing periods between 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> . I don't have any friends in 3 <sup>rd</sup> period, so all the loud people are annoying.
When (positive times)	place where the student feels safe, comfortable, or included	Well, I met Hannah in my – in the – she's in my language arts class – so is Caitlin.
Where (positive places)	time of day when the student feels safe, comfortable, or included	The locker rooms is where my friends are, and so I like it there.
Conflict with Peers	participating in or witnessing a fight (physical or verbal) or conflict with peers	I don't know, I just like because over the summer we like started getting in lots of fights over pretty much nothing.
Self-Description of Personality or Abilities	a self-description of a participant's personality or abilities	It's easy for me to make friends, most of the time, so that's nice, and I don't know.
Positive Relational Change	mention the making of a friend or a positive change in an existing friendship	This is how I met Laura. I was under the table in Art trying to get away from the migraine makers.
Negative Relational Change	mention the losing of a friend or a negative change in an existing friendship	I don't sit with them at lunch at anymore. I don't have any classes with them.
Outside Friends	mention of having friends that do not go to the school or mention of hanging out with friends outside of school	I have friends that go to Southlake. I have sleepovers on the weekends or go camping, sometimes go swimming.

Code	Definition	Example from Data
Not Understanding	expression of not understanding why an event or situation took place	Katie was, kinda, giving me and Jill glares...and I went over and tried to talk to her. And she would turn away, or she would look at me.
Included	expression of feeling included or part of a group	Well, I have friends in PE and in aerobics so we just go to flex time from there all together.
Left Out	expression of feeling left out or excluded from a group	At first, it was really easy, like I said, but then, as it goes on, it gets harder because it always seems like there's somebody who's against you, I guess, or who's not on your side, who's looking at you like you're weird.
Safe	feeling emotional or physically safe	I feel the most comfortable in the seventh grade hall because I have a friend in the seventh grade hall.
Unsafe	feeling emotionally or physically unsafe	He's only a jerk in PE. You get adrenaline just walking in there.
Hostility	expression of hostility directed towards peers; especially name calling and using the word hate	I hate the gym. It is full of jerks...a lot of the eighth graders say sevie's are stupid, so do the ninth graders.
Positive Interaction with Adult	positive or negative mention of a specific adult or a group of adults	They help (the counselors). They helped her (sister) when she was upset, so I thought I would give it a try and see if they could help me.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis and Findings

This chapter presents findings from eight student participant cases. The following cases were created based on analysis of the context and picture interviews, as well as my own interactions with and observations of the students at the school throughout the year and an end-of-year reciprocal friend nomination survey. Each case is presented initially for findings and understandings about friendlessness at school, then organized to answer the two primary research questions. Specifically, I examine when and where do students feel the most isolated or distressed at school? Emerging themes are then presented for each case to describe their experiences with friendships, isolation and belonging. A cursory examination of experiences relevant across cases is then used to highlight themes that emerge from these cases to inform the broad question of the experience of friendlessness in the transition to junior high school.

Each of these cases represent students that received zero reciprocal friend nominations on a friend nomination survey for all 7<sup>th</sup> grade students at the school. Additionally, all 8 students also lived in the school catchment area for *at least* three years. Because social self-efficacy is related to the formation of peer relationships, the eight participants also display varying social self-efficacy levels. Four students in this case study have high social self-efficacy (two girls and two boys; >30) and four have low social self-efficacy (two girls and two boys; <21). Findings from these cases are organized according to the participants' social self-efficacy starting with the highest.

#### **Lance: High Social Self-Efficacy Male**

With a score of 40 out of 40 (>30= high), Lance has the highest social self-efficacy score of any student in the study. Lance is also the oldest participant in the study at 13-years-old. He

has lived in Grapevine since kindergarten. Lance is the youngest of four children with two older sisters and one older brother. Lance lives with his mom, dad, and siblings. Lance's mom teaches at the junior high school where he attends.

Lance loves to play sports and is involved in basketball, soccer, and baseball. He also loves to sing and is involved in choir and theatre. He takes voice lessons and says that is his favorite thing.

Lance does really well in school. He gets mostly A's and B's. Doing well in school is really important to Lance and he gets very stressed when his grades slip below a B. He says he misses school quite a bit due to common illnesses like the flu or a bad cold and it is really hard for him to make up his work when he is gone.

When I see Lance at school he appears to be very confident. He often walks through the halls alone, but with his head held high. He is well dressed and good-looking. During the interview it seemed that Lance was trying really hard to give me the "right" answers. At one point during the interview he even said, "Wait, I want to think and give you the right answer." Lance appears to be a perfectionist.

**School experience.** When I showed Lance a picture of a classroom during the second interview, he said he met his best friend, Chase, in math class. Chase then introduced Lance to his friends. During the picture interview Lance told me that he quickly became part of Chase's friend group.

The lunchroom is a good place for Lance. Lance meets his friends in the hallway outside of his classroom and they walk down to lunch together and "just talk and eat." Lance's favorite class is band. He says he likes band because "it's just a totally different environment. Just like in other classes, a lot of times people are stressed out or like messing around, but in the band room,

we're not like overly quiet or overly talkative. We're just kind of a good medium.” Lance said that he did not have any friends in band. Lance has friends in other classes, but those classes are not his favorite. It shows that friends are not necessarily the most important thing in determining if he is happy at school because Lance’s favorite class is not a class with friends, but a class where he likes the environment.

Lance also loves going to dances. He says, “I enjoy the dances because everybody acts differently. Like people that are normal [*sic*], like really quiet and shy at school are sometimes like really talkative or crazy at the dances. I just think it's interesting to see how different people act totally different.” It is noteworthy that when talking about why he likes dances he doesn’t say he likes hanging out with his friends. This suggests that either being around friends is not always the most important factor for Lance when determining if he enjoys an activity or that he is not stressed about having friends.

**Lance’s friends.** Lance experienced a disruption in his friend group from elementary school to junior high. Lance went to an elementary school where the students went to two different junior high schools. Lance told me that his close friends in elementary school went to the other junior high: “So when I came here I was like, I knew some people, but I didn’t have any real close friends.” This was really difficult for Lance. He said, “From my elementary school, most of the kids went to the other junior high, so I have a lot of obstacles.” For so much of the interview Lance was trying to portray himself as not having any problems, so admitting that he had obstacles when he first came to junior high really stood out.

One of Lance’s friends did come with him to junior high, but Lance said they did not hang out much in junior high he said, “When we see each other it’s a little bit different, you know, just because we’ve grown not a part, but like differently.” Lance could not articulate why

he and his old friend grew apart except to say that he did not see his friend as much in junior high and his friend started hanging out with other people.

Lance was quickly able to make new friends. Lance likes “coming to school to see friends.” In elementary school Lance told me that he had one or two good friends, but that in junior high he has branched out and now he has a “larger friend group.”

While Lance has friends that he hangs out with at school, he does not hang out with school friends outside of school. When talking about hanging out with his school friends outside of school Lance said, “We talked about hanging out after school, but again we’d tried to, but some things come up every time.” Although Lance has friends that he hangs out with at school, but those friendships do not extend beyond the school day. This suggests that Lance’s friendships at school are not strong enough to go beyond school, he is too busy with voice lessons or other after school activities, or perhaps Lance’s friendship needs outside of school are met by his family.

**Lance: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high as a result of a disruption in friend group due to structural and institutional organization. Lance’s close friends were assigned to a different junior high, and his relationship changed with his one friend who came with him to junior high school. Lance has high social self-efficacy and he was able to make new friends with students he met in his classes pretty quickly.

While by the end of the year Lance had friends at school, he did not hang out with those friends outside of school. He received one reciprocal friend nomination at the end of the year, so he has one significant friendship, but he does not have a strong connection with any other peers at school. Lance does not appear to be bothered by this. As long as he has people to hang out with during the times when other students are hanging out with friends he is content. He does not

seem to need or seek deep peer connection to be content at school. On the basis of the literature review, we know there is variation in the nature of friendlessness. The fact that Lance does not spend time with friends outside of school could indicate that he is passively withdrawn or socially disinterested, or more introverted as a subtype of socially disinterest. He may not have a strong motivation, or interest in engaging in social interaction with peers outside of school. He has high social self-efficacy, so he feels confident in his social abilities, but may lack the desire to build many reciprocal friendships. This could also be because his mother is at the school for support or because he needs few deep peer connection to feel happy at school.

### **Tyler: High Social Self-Efficacy Male**

Tyler is a 12-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine for eight years. He lives with both parents and is the oldest in his family with three younger brothers and one little sister. Tyler loves football, rugby, swimming, rock climbing, and hiking. He says he likes school and he reports that he gets good grades. Tyler scored high on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 35 (>30= high).

Tyler told me that he has friends, but when I asked him when he hung out with those friends or what he did with those friends, he could not give me any of that information. As I reviewed my field notes about Tyler, I noticed that every time I saw him in the hallway, he was by himself. This leads me to believe that Tyler might want to give the impression that he has friendships, when in fact he may not. As I was interviewing Tyler I got the impression that he was holding things back or not fully telling me what was really going on.

**School experience.** Tyler did not respond negatively to any of the pictures I showed him during the picture interview. He said he felt comfortable and hung out with friends in all of the pictures we talked about. He likes the lunch room because he sits with his friends. After lunch



he said, “we usually go outside and play football or Frisbee and then go to the next period after that.” Tyler never said he felt alone or uncomfortable in any part of the school. This shows that it is probable that either Tyler does not need deep, connected friendships to feel comfortable at school or that he does not feel comfortable disclosing to me that he feels isolated.

When I asked Tyler what makes him like or dislike a class, Tyler said he likes a class if you know people in the class and doesn't if he doesn't know anyone. In the picture interview Tyler and I talked about which friends were in each of his classes. He told me the names of his friends in each of his classes. I asked him if he spent time with those friends outside of school and he gave me vague responses like, “We try to hang out, but it doesn't work out” and “sometimes we see each other outside of school.” I tried many times during the interview to ask Tyler about specifics, but I could never get any concrete answers about what his friendships were like.

**Tyler's friends.** It was hard for Tyler at the beginning of the year because he went to an elementary school where students were split between two different junior high schools. It could also be true that Tyler did not have reciprocal friendships in elementary school. Unlike Lance, he does not mention or talk about any specific friends he had in elementary school. Tyler said, “It was a little difficult at the beginning of the year because I only knew a couple of people because my grade was split half in half. So I only knew a couple people here.” Tyler told me it was easy for him to make friends because he is a social person: “I'm definitely talkative, pretty friendly.” He also said that he “had lots of friends.” It appears that he knows and is friendly with people but did not receive any reciprocal friendship nominations, indicating that he may not have had any close friendships.

**Tyler: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high for a student who appears from the outside to have friends, but does not have any stated reciprocal friendships. As documented in my field notes, I often saw Tyler alone, but sometimes saw Tyler hanging around with other students, but he still did not have any reciprocal friend nominations at the end of the year.

Tyler has high social self-efficacy and knows the “right” things to say and the “right” way to act. He says he has friends and he hangs out with peers who do the same activities with him, but he does not connect deeply with anyone at school, or at least no one connects with him. He is able to adapt to different social situations and fit in with different groups at school so he does not stand out. On the surface, he never appears lonely, while not having any reciprocal friendships. One would think that because Tyler has high social self-efficacy he would be able to develop reciprocal friendships, but that is not the case.

It is very likely that Tyler does desire reciprocal friend connections to feel contented and comfortable at school because he states that peers are important to him. It is also likely that being included as part of a group is sufficient for Tyler. Tyler does not appear to have social anxiety or to be particularly introverted; however, he experiences some kinds of social isolation, which he does not express as being particularly distressing to him.

### **Lori: High Social Self-Efficacy Female**

Lori is a 12-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine for her entire life. She lives with both parents and is the youngest in her family with one older brother and two older sisters. Lori loves softball and dance, but has not been able to participate in those activities the past year because her family is having some financial difficulties. Lori gets good grades and

reports, for the most part, to like school. Lori scored high on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 31 (>30= high).

During the first interview early in the school year, Lori seemed a little shy and unsure of herself, but I noticed a change during the second interview, which was held three months later. In the second interview she had a more confident demeanor and answered in a more confident manner. I noticed this same change in Lori as I observed her around the school, as documented in my field notes. In April I wrote in my field notes, “I saw Lori on the lunchroom today hamming it up for a camera with two other girls.”

**School experience.** During the second interview, when I showed Lori a picture of the seventh grade hallway (a hallway where all the seventh grade lockers are located), Lori expressed that she did not feel emotionally safe in the hallway. She states that she often feels unsafe when she passes girls who used to be her friends in elementary and are now ignoring her in the hallway. When talking about another student who she was friends with in elementary school Lori said, “I came back to school in junior high, and I saw her in the hall and I went and stopped to say hi and she just kept on walking and didn’t even look at me.” This made Lori feel alone, isolated, and confused. The girl who ignored her in the hallway then became part of a group that Lori saw in the hallway. Lori expressed discomfort about seeing the big group of girls in the hallway during passing periods: “There’s just this big group of girls that always hang out with each other—like I see them in the halls, or at lunch, so they’re just always together, and they just stare at me.”

In contrast, school dances are a place where Lori feels comfortable. She says, “I like going to the dances...almost every dance, I’ve danced with someone, like some boy, doing a slow dance, so that’s fun. I really like the dances. They’re crowded, but they’re fun.” From that

quote we can surmise that Lori's interactions with boys at the dances are one reason she enjoys going to dances. It appears that the fitting in, being acknowledged, accepted and comfortable in social interactions make Lori happy.

Other reasons Lori states for liking certain places or classes in school is related to the activities and not the friends she has in the classes. For example, she likes P.E. because she likes to exercise and play sports. She also says she likes band because she likes music, her whole family is involved in band, and she likes the teacher.

**Lori's friends.** In both the context interview at the beginning of the school year and the picture interview a few months later, Lori talked about having friends, but she does not express confidence in her friendships. When talking generally about making friends Lori says, "It's easy for me to make friends, most of the time, so that's nice, and I don't know." At first she is positive about her friend making abilities, but she still expresses doubt. She is not 100% confident about her ability to fit in. This could be because she has experienced rejection from friends over the course of the school year.

Many of the important friendships formed in elementary school were lost for Lori when she came to junior high. Lori has a hard time understanding why these friendships ended. Girls who she thought were her friends began to ignore her. When talking about a friend from elementary school she says, "Just one day she didn't want to be my friend anymore." She says, "I was friends with this girl last year and we were pretty good friends, but just this year, she wasn't my friend anymore and it's kind of complicated." When I questioned Lori about why it was complicated she reported that she had a "big fight" with one other girl. When Lori tries to talk to this girl about why they are no longer friends, the other girl refuses to talk to her. This only adds

to her confusion about why she had suddenly lost a friendship and could be contributing to Lori's lack of confidence in her ability to make friends.

Lori did not only lose friendships during the transition to junior high, but many of her friendships also changed. Students who she considered close friends in elementary school, became distant in junior high. This caused confusion for Lori at the beginning of the year, but eventually she was able to accept that she would not have the same friends in junior high.

Lori expresses that sometimes when she tries to make new friends she is rejected: "Some people I try to become friends with them, but they kind of just don't want to." As someone with high social self-efficacy, when Lori gets rejected, she moves on and continues to try to make new friends.

Lori spoke often about one of those emerging friendships in her interviews. Sophie and Lori met in science class. They go to dances together and have lunchtime together. Sophie did not identify Lori as a friend on the survey given at the beginning of the year, but she did identify Lori in the survey given at the end of the year. Lori's other reciprocal friendship was another girl who is friends with Sophie.

**Lori: Case summary.** Lori came to junior high expecting and thinking she would continue the friendships she developed throughout elementary school. In the first few weeks of school, those friendships were lost or changed because of what Lori calls "girl drama" and a "big fight." Because of this relational hostility and aggression, junior high then became an emotional unsafe place for Lori. Lori may have even experienced social anxiety. Lori expresses this when she says, "there's somebody who's against you" in junior high. Unsure of herself and friendless Lori shows her resiliency when she decides to make new friends. The fact that Lori had high social self-efficacy may have played a role in this resiliency. She finds a friend in Sophie, and

Sophie introduces her to other friends. By the end of the year, junior high does not feel unsafe for Lori. When I saw Lori in the hall or the lunchroom she was usually with another student and was often times smiling and laughing. The transition to junior high cost Lori the friendships she formed in elementary but she was able to overcome that loss and make new friends by the end of her 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. At the beginning of the year, Lori was unsure of herself and embarrassed that she lost her friendships. In contrast, at the end of the year Lori seemed confident and happy with her new friends.

**Kylie: High Social Self-Efficacy Female**

Kylie is a 12-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine for nine years. Kylie lives with both parents and her two older brothers, who are 16 and 18. Kylie switched elementary schools three times from first grade to sixth grade. She attended a local charter school for first and second grade, and then went to an elementary school within the school district for third and part of fourth. In the middle of fourth grade, Kylie's family moved to a different house in Grapevine and she again switched to a new elementary school. Academically Kylie professes to struggle. She says she does not fail her classes, but she does not get straight A's either. Kylie considers herself an artist. She loves to draw anime and animals. She also likes to play on an electronic tablet. Kylie also scored high on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 31 (>30= high).

During our interviews together Kylie rarely made eye-contact with me. While the other female students seemed to enjoy being interviewed, Kylie did not. She would give me short, answers and needed a lot of encouragement to talk. From both my interactions with her during our interviews and my observations in the field notes, Kylie seems to not feel comfortable talking to most people. In her classes she is reticent to work with partners or groups and instead

of talking to her peers during free time, she draws in her notebook. Based on our interviews and my field note observations of Kylie, I would describe her behaviors as socially disinterested and introverted. She prefers solitary activities to social ones.

**School experience.** In our second interview, I showed Kylie pictures of specific places in the school. When I showed Kylie a picture of the lunch room, Kylie told me she eats lunch at a table with a group of girls, but when the girls go outside after lunch Kylie stays in the lunchroom by herself and draws. She says, “I stay in and draw at lunch because that’s what I want to do. I don’t like going outside because of all the people and I don’t have anything to talk about.” Kylie expresses difficulty being around people, which is a theme that came up over and over again during our interviews. When talking about a picture of the hallway Kylie says, “I don’t like all the people around, and I like being the only one in the hallway.” Kylie’s socially disinterested and socially withdrawn behaviors are an important part of her approach when it comes to making friends. She displays introverted tendencies to keep to herself and expressed discomfort in large, loud groups. Her apparent shyness, and perhaps even social anxiety, possibly leads Kylie to isolate herself from her peers, which blocks her from forming reciprocal friendships.

Kylie told me that she doesn’t like certain classes because she doesn’t know anyone in the class. When talking about P.E. she says, “I don’t really have any friends in there. I have like one eighth grader friend, except she’s kind of bossy when it comes to sports.”

**Kylie’s friends.** Kylie is often alone at school and she told me in the context interview that she feels isolated. Sometimes, like when the girls she eats lunch with go outside, Kylie chooses to be alone. Other times Kylie feels actively isolated when other students leave her out. Each day students have 20 minutes where they can choose what class they will go to for extra help. This time is called Flex Time. If they do not need extra help, they can choose to go to an

activity. Kylie has a plan about where she will go during Flex Time. Most students spend time with friends during this time, but Kylie is alone during Flex Time. Kylie says, "I just go by myself. I like being by myself." Before school starts when many students are in the hall or other classrooms talking to friends, Kylie says she sits in her first period classroom and draws. Perhaps Kylie prefers to be alone, but it could also be that when she feels discomfort she isolates herself.

In her last class of the day Kylie says she "feels stress" because of some of the girls in the class. She says they are loud and talk about "weird things." When I asked Kylie about what things they talk about she says, "They talk about other girls in the class. They are...not really nice." Kylie is clearly uncomfortable with negative gossip about people she may not even know. This indicates a sensitivity that may also be related to her difficulties in forming friendships. It is possible that Kylie's sensitivity might enable her to thrive in an environment where she felt comfortable and had more opportunities to make friends. Kylie shows more sensitivity when interacting with individuals at school when she mentions feeling safe in one class because the teacher is "really nice" and "doesn't get mad." This statement indicates that Kylie is not only sensitive when interacting with peers, but also with her teachers.

Kylie says she is happy to be by herself, but also reports to not liking school because she has "no one to talk to." There is a conflict between the way Kylie talks about her friend experience. On one hand she says she is happy being alone when she says, "I like being alone." On the other hand, she expresses sadness when talking about being alone when she says, "I feel left out. I am just happy to go home." Kylie does not like being in big groups, but would like a friend to talk to at school. This is more evidence that indicates that Kylie exhibits more introverted behaviors and is passively withdrawn at school.



**Kylie: Case summary.** This case shows us friendlessness during the first year of junior high for someone who is lonely at school and wants to make friends. It appears that Kylie is extremely shy and her more introverted personality shows up when she is clearly not comfortable navigating large, loud, groups of students which is often part of the junior high school environment. Through our interviews I perceived that Kylie does not know how to navigate this social space in order to build a friendship in this setting. She wants to make friends, but is unable to do so. Because she is not able to make friends, she tells herself that she would rather be alone.

Kylie seems to get lost in the crowd; going from class to class and never really connecting with people. Kylie has high social self-efficacy, but she is still unable to make friends. Kylie's case represents a bad institutional fit. Because she has high social self-efficacy, one would think she should be able to make friends, but possibly because she is introverted, shy, and prefers solitary activities she does not get the support she needs to facilitate making friends. On the end-of-the-year survey Kylie still did not have any reciprocal friend nominations.

**Michael: Low Social Self-Efficacy Male**

Michael is a 12-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine all of his life. He lives with his mom and dad and he is the oldest in his family with one little brother and two little sisters. Wrestling is a huge part of Michael's life. He started wrestling when he was four years old and practices everyday. Wrestling is also a huge part of Michael's family, as his dad and each of his siblings also wrestle. For Michael, the wrestling season goes all year because he competes in two kinds of wrestling, and his weekends are spent at wrestling competitions.

Michael says that he does not spend time with friends and misses a lot of school because of wrestling. He struggles in school because it is hard for him to get caught up when he misses. Michael scored low on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 21(>21=low).

**School experience.** Michael has a difficult time in the hallways. He says that he feels “most comfortable in the seventh grade hall” because he has friends in that hallway, but he does not like the eighth and ninth grade hallways. Being around the eighth and ninth grade students in general makes Michael uncomfortable. He says in the eighth and ninth grade hallways “everybody’s huge and stuff.” Michael is a physically small seventh grader and could very likely be intimidated by the size of the eighth and ninth graders.

Michael does not go to many outside of school activities because “his friends don’t go.” He especially doesn’t like to go to dances because he doesn’t have anyone to dance with and he says, “I don’t know if anybody would dance with me.” This quote suggests that Michael may want to go dances and other outside of school activities, but is reluctant to go because he does not have any friends to go with.

**Michael’s friends.** Michael perceives that the other students’ behavior has changed from elementary school. He said, “It is hard because it is different. Just like different kids – like you’re going to school with like a bunch of big kids that swear and stuff.” This may be difficult for Michael because he is the oldest in his family and he is not used to being around older kids. He has always been the oldest person at school and at home, so being around older students, and students who are different than what he is used to, is not comfortable for him.

Michael says he likes school because it is fun to see his friends, but he struggles because the schoolwork is difficult for him. Michael misses a lot of school for wrestling. When he misses school, he gets behind and it is very difficult for him to get caught up. He has had a difficult time transitioning from elementary school to junior high: “In elementary it was like just like easy – you know, like fun. Just like, do whatever you know. But then you like come here, and there’s like – it’s like you have to do this, this, this, this, this and this. And it’s like super hard. And like

different.” School is so unpleasant for Michael that he says there are days that he tells his mom that he does not want to come to school. His mom sometimes lets him miss. Michael missing school likely affects him in more ways than just academically. Missing school pulls him out the school social structure and may be a reason why he does not have any reciprocal friendships and has had a difficult time getting used to the eighth and ninth graders and a new school environment.

Although he does not have any reciprocal friends at school, Michael says that it is easy for him to make friends because he “hangs out with the same friends he hung out with last year.” He says that he has made some new friends through his football team, but he cannot remember his new friends’ names. It is clear that as Michael cannot remember his football friends’ names, that they are not close friendships.

Michael says that his best friends are friends he has made through his club wrestling team. These are friends that he does not go to school with. He likes his wrestling team friends because “they don’t like swear or anything like that.” He doesn’t always feel comfortable with some of his friends he has at the junior high because they swear or smoke. Michael’s wrestling friends could possibly be filling his friendship needs, so he does not feel the need to make friends at school. His wrestling friends may fill his identity needs, but he is still uncomfortable at school and feels like he does not want to come.

**Michael: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high for a student who was developmentally and socially not ready for the structural and social changes that occur from elementary school to junior high. These school changes made it hard for Michael to make friends as well as hard for him to do well academically.

Michael comes across as young and innocent. It bothers him that his peers swear. He doesn't want to hang out with other students who are "doing bad things," so he doesn't hang out with anyone. More than not wanting to hang out with peers who are doing things he does not approve of, Michael is unable to navigate the complicated junior high social waters. From the information I gathered in the interviews, I think Michael had mostly cursory relationships in elementary school, although he was comfortable with the students that were in his class all day. Now he has come to junior high where he does not see the same kids all day and he does not know how to connect more substantively with friends. He is not motivated to try to make friends because he is afraid that they will not be supportive of his values and because he spends his free time with his family and wrestling. Those are the two places he gets his social interaction. He does not have friends at school and did not receive any reciprocal friend nominations at the end of the year. Because Michael is not developmentally ready for the secondary school structure, he might be experiencing some anxiety, both socially and academically. In some ways he might also be passively withdrawn as he pulls away from peers that he perceives as "bad." At his current developmental level, the school structure is not a good fit for Michael and there are not institutional mechanisms to assist into his transition.

The secondary school structure has also impacted Michael's ability to be successful academically. Changing classes and having six different teachers has increased the complexity of the school workload and Michael has been overwhelmed. Because he is overwhelmed, he does not want to go to school, which puts him farther behind academically and also pulls him out of the social system of school.

**Tina: Low Social Self-Efficacy Female**

Tina is an 11-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine her whole life. She lives with both her mom and her dad, and has one older brother and sister and one little brother. Tina loves to ride horse western style. She has participated in several riding competitions. Her grandmother owns several horses and lets Tina train on her horses. Tina's family has many animals and Tina likes taking care of the animals after school. Tina also says she likes hanging out with her friends after school. Tina scored low on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 21 ( $21 \leq$  low).

In our first interview, Tina says her biggest worry in terms of school is failing. She describes herself as an "airhead" who talks too much in class and doesn't always pay attention when the teacher is talking. Even though she has to work really hard to get good grades, Tina likes school. She enjoys all but one of her classes, and she likes her teachers.

Tina has lots of unreserved personality. She is very animated when she talks and she says she looks forward to our interviews because she loves to talk to people. In the hallway Tina is loud and is usually joking around with her friends. In the beginning of our second interview Tina told me that she loved our interviews. Tina would stop by my classroom to say hi and chat with me throughout the school year. During the interviews and in my observations of Tina, Tina exhibited extroverted behaviors.

**School experience.** Tina says she loves school. She did not express any negative feelings about particular places in the school nor did she express any negative feelings about particular times of the day. She loves school dances and has gone to all of them. She says they are fun because "my friends are there, we can just, hang out and have a good time." Tina also loves lunch because she meets up with her friends and talks.

The one place in the school that Tina expressed any feeling besides excitement was the counseling office. The counseling office is still a good place for Tina, but her feelings about the counseling office are complex. At the beginning of the year Tina went to the counselors for help when she was having problems with her friends. She says that the counselors helped her when she was upset about fighting with her friends. Throughout the year Tina also went to the counselors for advice about how to handle problems with friends. Because the counselors were able to help Tina, she defines the counseling office is a safe place for her. This is important for Tina because it allowed her to use the school counselors as a resource when she was having problems with friends.

**Tina's friends.** Over the summer and at the beginning of the year Tina had a major disruption in her friend group because of a few "big fights." She says, "There was a big fight going on between a bunch of girls. And I, kind of, got into it because I'm friends with them. But the two girls that mainly were in the fight...one of them wanted me to stick with them...the other one wanted me to stick with them." This big summer fight bled into the school year and was made worse by "rumor spreading" and talking behind each other's backs. Tina experienced open conflict with her peers. Tina understands what the conflict is about and was able to seek help from the counselors. Tina's ability to advocate for herself is likely a major reason why she had a positive view of the school.

The first few weeks of school Tina says she "split apart" from her best friend because of all the fighting. During all of the fighting Tina went to the counselors for help. The counselor told Tina that it might be best if she took a break from this particular group of girls. Even though Tina has low social self-efficacy, she took the counselors advice and because of this break Tina was friendless at the beginning of the year.

Tina was able to make new friends. She quickly became friends with a girl who was not involved with the fighting over the summer. Tina says that her new friend helped her make other new friends. Tina also says that it was pretty easy for her to make new friends.

**Tina: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high as a result of relational aggression and open conflict between Tina and her elementary friend group. Tina was aware of the reasons she was having difficulty with friends and was able to seek help from the school counselor. Tina appears to be extroverted and was able to navigate a change in friendship groups leaving one group and joining another despite having lower social self-efficacy. Tina's social interest and extroverted behaviors aided her ability to make friends. At the end of the year, Tina had three reciprocal friend nominations, which is very high compared to other students. Although she had a difficult start to the year and felt isolated, she was able to make new friends.

**Evan: Low Social Self-Efficacy Male**

Evan is a 12-year-old seventh grader who has lived in Grapevine his whole life. Even though Evan grew up in Grapevine, he did not attend a neighborhood elementary. He went to a local charter school. Evan's parents are divorced, and he lives with his dad and stepmom for half of the week and with his mom for the other half of the week. The custody arrangement does not follow a set schedule, so Evan stays with a different parent based on where he wants to go or which parent can pick him up from school.

Evan has one older sister and one younger brother and sister. It is obvious that Evan looks up to his older sister, as his face lights up when he talks about her. Evan told me one of his favorite memories from his seventh grade year was when his older sister, who is in high school,

brought his first period class cupcakes for his birthday. He says his brother is annoying, but he likes hanging out with him and he says his little sister is hilarious.

Evan loves to play computer and video games. He spends hours after school playing on the computer. He even says that the solitary activity of playing computer games distracts him from playing with his friends. He also loves to ride his bike.

Evan struggles with his grades in school. He says that he is not one of those students who “gets A’s all the time” and he is in several special education classes at the school. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade counselor calls Evan into her office a few times a term to talk about how he can get his grades up.

Evan was the quietest and most reserved student I interviewed. It took him almost the entire first interview for him to warm up and begin to share with me, but he was much freer with his thoughts in the second interview. In the hallway Evan walks with his head down and avoids making eye contact. Evan scored low on the social self-efficacy measure with a score of 21 (21 < = low).

**School experience.** Evan says that he does not like school. When I showed him a picture of a classroom Evan said he thinks of “boringness and a napping place.” When I showed Evan a picture of his last period classroom he said, “I feel excitement. It’s the end of the day for me. Like, last hour of school.” From these quotes we can assume that Evan comes to school and just tries to get through the day.

There are many places in the school that Evan has very strong negative feelings about. He says, “I hate the gym. It is full of jerks.” When Evan walks in to P.E. he says he can feel the adrenaline getting him pumped up.



Evan also does not feel comfortable in the hallways because they are “really crowded.” He tells me he avoids the hallways because he is always running into people. When Evan walks outside after lunch or during the passing period he says that he feels peace. The fact that Evan describes feeling peace when he walks outside and feel uncomfortable in crowd spaces could indicate that he is not comfortable in large groups and that he is more introverted.

Evan spends a lot of time at school alone. During the school’s Flex Time Evan goes to different classes by himself, instead of meeting up with friends as is typical of students. He says sometimes he has a friend to go around with, but usually he goes around by himself. Evan also eats lunch by himself. When talking about lunch Evan says he just “sits and waits.” These behaviors are consistent with someone who is passively withdrawn. He is not actively isolated by his peers, but he chooses to isolated himself.

**Evan’s friends.** Coming to junior high has been hard for Evan: “The work and the social life have been hard.” Evan says it is hard to come to a new school because he does not have many friends and feels isolated. He says he only has two “really good friends” at school and he does not hang out with those friends anymore. When I asked him why he thinks he doesn’t hang out with those friends anymore he said, “I just don’t have much time or I’ll get too distracted by the computer.”

Evan worries about physical fights and aggression. He mentioned being worried about fights several times during the picture interview. He says he likes smaller class because everyone knows each other more and “If someone starts to get aggressive it’s easier for the teacher to break it up.” When I asked Evan if he has ever been in a physical fight, he said he had not. He did mention feeling “amped up” on the crowd hallways and in P.E. When I asked Evan what he was more worried about he said he just wanted to be normal and he didn’t want to “piss anyone off

and I don't want to make a big thing." This shows that Evan might feel conspicuous or it could be an aspect of social anxiety. It also shows that again, Evan is worried about making people mad and getting in a fight, but it is not clear exactly what this is related to.

During both of my interviews with Evan it was hard for me to nail down specific details. When I showed Evan a picture of a dance Evan said, "I've never really been to a dance, so I can't really explain it. Well, I can explain my point of view, which is it's really sweaty, gross, and hot. I've never been there. I just don't feel like being in a crowded space. Sometimes I don't have, my clothes are at my dad's house, or my mom's house, or the money." This quote is full of nuance and ambiguities. He says he has never been to a dance, but then he says they are probably hot and sweaty. He says he doesn't want to go because they are crowded, but then he says he doesn't go because he does not have clothes or money. Both of Evan's interviews had these kinds of complexities, which could suggest that he is not disclosing something or he is confused about why he does not like certain activities. Evan could be hiding something about his own past experiences or family or there may be something happening at school that he does not feel comfortable sharing. The complexities could also be due to Evan's not understanding his introverted tendencies and his fear of aggression. He does not want to go to dances because he does not like loud, crowded places, and he fears there could be a fight, but he is not consciously aware of his social needs and where they may come from.

**Evan: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high for a student who is very isolated at school. Evan is alone most of the time at school and he appears to be isolated for two reasons. First, he is worried about other students being aggressive towards him, and he goes through his day avoiding situations where conflict could arise. Because he believes conflict could arise at almost any time, he avoids most social interactions. Second, he

is isolated because he doesn't want to or can't commit to a friendship. Perhaps, the fact that his personal life is hectic and always fluctuating affects his friendships at school. As he often doesn't know where he will be staying at night, how can he have friends over?

Evan has low social self-efficacy, and his interviews show his lack of confidence in his ability to make friends. Evan expresses the desire to make friends, but he is unable to do so in a way that is comfortable to him and has essentially accepted friendlessness. Evan is likely passively withdrawn and also expresses fear of violence and aggression when talking about people at school. This combination of passive withdrawal and social fear could be a possible explanation for Evan's inability to make friends. Evan's family situation, coupled with his social anxiety, academic struggles, and introverted nature makes it all just too much for him to handle by himself. Evan did not receive any reciprocal friend nominations at the end of the year.

#### **Hannah: Low Social Self-Efficacy Female**

Hannah is a 12-year-old seventh grader who scored the lowest (13) on the social self-efficacy scale of all cases and in the school. Hannah moved to Grapevine four years ago and lives with her aunt, uncle, sister, and little brother. When Hannah is not at school she loves to draw and read.

Like Evan, Hannah also has a complicated family life. Hannah's parents were never married and Hannah does not know where her mom or dad are living. She has not seen her mom in several years. She thinks that her mom might be engaged, but she is not sure. Hannah expresses really negative feelings toward her dad. When she was little she experienced considerable family disruption. Hannah briefly lived with her mom, then her dad, then her grandma, but for the past four years she has lived with her aunt and uncle. Hannah loves her aunt and uncle.

When talking about her family, Hannah expresses anger and frustration. She blames her dad for holding her back a year in school, putting her in the same grade as her little sister. Hannah is a year older than her sister, but they are in the same grade in school because Hannah was held back a year in the first grade. Hannah and her sister hang out at school, but Hannah says they have very different friends and are in very different social groups. Hannah says it bothers her and she has arguments with her sister about the different friend groups they associate with. Hannah identifies with the “geek” group, whereas her sister is in the “cool” group. Hannah says she does not like her sister’s friends and she openly tells her sister so.

Hannah says that school is difficult for her. She is in three special education classes and she sometimes fails her classes. She told me that school is hard for her and she sometimes gives up. Hannah misses school at least three times a month because she is sick, or pretending to be sick. She meets with the 7<sup>th</sup> grade counselor and the school psychologist once a week to talk about her feelings. While school is difficult for Hannah she says she is a “teacher’s pet” and she “likes to help the teachers.” She also says that she has a “good relationship with all teachers.”

I perceived Hannah to be energetic and blunt. She openly told me who she likes and who she does not. She gives high praise to people she loves and harsh criticism to those she does not. She told me that she loved being interviewed and she talked a lot. Her interviews were the longest of the study.

**School experience.** When I showed Hannah the pictures during our second interview, she expressed very negative feelings about many places in the school. She says she hates the hallways the worst because they are crowded and loud. She says the hallways give her migraines and that when she is in the hallways she wants to “go dig a hole and die.” She exhibits introverted thoughts when she says she dislikes loud, crowded places. She also feels like people

are looking at her in the hallways. She feels like she sticks out and people are judging her. She says, "I always look like this, with my hood up in the hall and I'm always wearing this jacket no matter where I go. People, I feel like they look at me like, 'oh, there's the shy girl,' which is perfectly lame." This shows that, like Kylie and Evan, she is sensitive which leads to a certain amount of social anxiety and passive withdrawal. It is possible that Hannah has felt socially rejected and actively isolated in the past, so her fear of rejection motivates her to reject her peers before they can reject her.

Hannah likes to spend time in classrooms with teachers. Her favorite teacher is Miss Jones. She spends time in Miss Jones's room before and after school. She refers to Miss Jones's classroom as a "safe zone." The only "safe zones" in the school, according to Hannah, are Miss Jones's classroom, bathroom stalls, and high trees.

Hannah does report to like lunch and the lunchroom. Hannah says, "My favorite thing is seeing my friends at lunch." Hannah says she eats lunch with her friends, but when I ask her who her friends are, she cannot remember their names. The fact that Hannah cannot give me the names of the girls she eats lunch with indicates pretty superficial relationships with those girls.

Hannah spoke about one particularly interesting incident that happened during lunch that raises the question of the nature of these friendships. One day a girl came over to Hannah's table and told the girls that someone had graffitied the bathroom. All the girls went to go see the graffiti and left Hannah at the lunch by herself to watch their belongings. This incident shows that although Hannah is not physically alone at lunch, she does not really eat lunch with friends; rather she sits near a more cohesive friendship group at lunch that she watches and feels connected to.

Hannah has met people through her classes. She met a girl in art. Hannah says she was sitting under the table trying to get away from the “migraine makers” (students who were being loud) when she met another student who did not like the loud students as well. Hannah felt connected to the girl because of their shared dislike of the other students. Hannah and the girl sat by each other and worked together throughout the semester.

Hannah also met a girl in math. Hannah explains, “Laura had nobody to do the assignment with and neither did I, so she and I were the last ones left because we had no friends in that class period.” Being with Laura prevented Hannah from being physically alone, but it did not help Hannah feel socially connected.

**Hannah’s friends.** Hannah says it is difficult for her to make friends. She says it is difficult for her to make friends because of a bullying experience she had when she was in elementary school. She says, “All the kids used to grab my piggy tails and pull me around.” This experience had a negative impact on Hannah’s ability to make friends and on her view of other students. Hannah says, “It’s been so hard for me to make friends that I can’t approach a single person without having to listen in on their conversations, speak to them once in a while, or they come and talk to me first.” This appears to describe her relationship with the girls at her lunch table.

It is difficult for Hannah to approach other students, so she sits near students who are talking and listens in on what they are saying. She recognizes that this is something that she does because she does not feel included and does not think she will be invited into social groups or friendships. When she is not accepted into a group she says she “forces” herself into that group. When talking about a group she forced her way into she says, “I’d follow them around until they

came attached to me.” Being near other students is a way for Hannah to feel like she is part of the group without actually being accepted or emotionally connected to anyone in the group.

Hannah speaks very negatively about other students and shows a lot of negativity and even hostility when speaking about the school. She says, “Everybody’s freaking annoying” and “I personally hate human beings. I hate myself for being a human being.” She says that “only one percent of junior high students are good.” In class she says that she puts her hood up and puts her head between her arms, so she doesn’t have to speak to all the “dumb and annoying people.” Because she cannot connect with people her own age, she is hostile towards them.

Hannah considers some of the teachers her friends. During much of Hannah’s free time at school, she is spending time with teachers. Earlier in the interview Hannah says she eats lunch with friends, but later, when talking about her teachers she says, “They’re practically my only friends at school.” Hannah spends most of her unstructured time at school with her favorite teacher instead of with her peers. Hannah says, “Honestly I don’t care that I’m friends with the teachers. Teachers are awesome. They help us learn. They’re awesome.” Even though she says she does not care that she is friends with teachers I get the impression that she does care. I believe that Hannah does want to have friends her own age, but she does not feel accepted and she does not know how to connect with her peers.

**Hannah: Case summary.** This case shows friendlessness during the first year of junior high for a student who, because of past and reoccurring rejection and active isolation from peers, is openly hostile towards other students. Hannah talks about being rejected many times in the past and that she continues to be rejected by her peers. She sees herself as an outsider who is very different from her peers and prefers spaces where she can be alone. This could be because she feels unwelcome through active isolation. The combination of active isolation from peers and

Hannah's preference for solitude is a difficult one to overcome in forming friendships. The fact that she feels different from her peers could be, in part, because she was held back a year in school and she is classified as a special education student, so she could see herself as having to deal with the possibility that she is considered deficient. It is difficult for her to make friends, so she rejects most students before they can reject her. She has a couple teachers that offer her a place to be safe and make her feel less alone, but at the end of the year Hannah still did not have any reciprocal friend nominations. Although Hannah is sometimes hostile and often blunt, and not really very shy, her introversion may be easily overlooked. However, she demonstrated many characteristics that are associated with this trait including being unhappy about crowds and noise as well as being more comfortable or "at peace" in less chaotic environments. This also could contribute to her sense of school as a hostile or uncomfortable space for her.

### **Cursory Cross Case Themes**

Several themes emerged across cases that describe what friendlessness was like for these students. The hallways were important places for all participants. Six out of the eight participants mentioned feeling the most comfortable in the seventh grade hallway and least comfortable in the ninth grade hallway. The hallways were also important places for both positive and negative social interactions. All of the female participants talked about incidents of talking to friends in the hallways as well as incidents where they were rejected or had conflicts with peers in the hallways. Lunch was another important place talked about by all eight participants. Like the hallways, lunch was a time and place to be included with friends and also where their friendlessness was acutely felt.

Peer group disruption was another important factor in the experience of friendlessness for the participants. All participants had some peer group disruption moving from elementary school



to junior high, but peer group disruption had a major impact on four participants in particular. Lori and Tina had fallings out with their elementary school friends in the summer or at the very beginning of the school year, this left both girls friendless at the beginning of the year. Additionally, Lance and Tyler both went to an elementary school where students split into two junior high schools. Both boys reported that their elementary school friends went to the other junior high, leaving them friendless at the beginning of the year. It is interesting to note that the type of peer disruption is gendered for these cases.

Family dynamics and the role of family were an important part of the students' friend experiences. For some students, like Evan and Hannah, issues relating to family that did not directly impact school life may have had an indirect influence on their social life in school and may have contributed to their friendless experiences. Lance was also affected by family dynamics because his mom was a teacher at the school. This allowed Lance to go to his mom's classroom during times when he was alone, where other students would not have had a parent to rely on for emotional support while at school. However, this may have inhibited Lance from making friends.

The role of adults at the school was not just important for Lance. Other students relied on adults at school for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. For example, Tina used the counselors as a resource when she was having difficulties with friends. Hannah also relied on an adult, her teacher Ms. Jones, at school, but Hannah put Ms. Jones in more of a friend role. In many cases, the participants looked to adults for support. Sometimes the adults assisted them in making friends, other times the adults may have hampered their ability to make friends because they became too much of a crutch for the student.

The participants' personality traits, especially their introversion and extroversion, appeared to play a major role in their ability to make friendships. Students who appeared more extroverted, in most cases, were able to make reciprocal friendships by the end of the year, while the more introverted students were not. Additionally, social anxiety and active and passive withdrawal appeared to be significant for many of the cases that did not achieve friendships by the end of the year. Furthermore, social disinterest also significantly affected the participants' ability to make friends.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

In this section I discuss major findings and implications from this study by tying the findings back to assertions from the research literature. Building on my findings that show how peer group disruption, personality traits, including introversion and extroversion, the role of adults at school, and family dynamics affect the experiences of the participants in terms of isolation, friendship, and belonging. This section also considers how insights from this study can potentially influence the practice of junior high administrators, counselors and teachers in the future. Lastly, in this section I provide suggestions for further research.

#### **Peer Group Disruption**

It is clear that peer group disruption is an important factor influencing adolescents' ability to keep and make friends (Hamburg, 1997). In the cases in this present study, we see two types of peer group disruption being important—peer disruption because of social dynamics and peer disruption due to institutional structures.

Both Lori and Tina illustrate an example of friendlessness as a result of negative social dynamics. They both had friendships in elementary school, but lost those friendships as a consequence of relational aggression, including social exclusion, gossip, and fighting (Crick & Dodge, 1999). The psychological damage that is possible due to relational aggression (Simmons, 2002) did not appear to affect these girls as they were not prevented from forming new friendships by the end of the year. It is likely that one reason they were able to make reciprocal friendships in junior high is because they had the prior experience of having reciprocal friendships in elementary school. The past friendships gave them the friendship-making skills and confidence to make new friendships. Interestingly, both participants who experienced peer

group disruption as a result of social dynamics were girls. In secondary schools, girls are sometimes inclined to have an issue with relational aggression. The behaviors that both Lori and Tina mention, being left out, gossiped about, and glared at in the hallway, are well documented in the research about girls in secondary school (Simmons, 2002).

Peer group disruption as a result of institutional structures is also evidenced in these cases through Lance and Tyler. Both Lance and Tyler went to an elementary school that split students into two different junior high schools. It is not totally clear from the data if Tyler had any reciprocal friendships in elementary school, but the data indicates that Lance did have reciprocal friendships. Like Lori and Tina, Lance was able to draw on his past friendship experiences and make new friends. He could have felt confidence because he had done it before and he could do it again. With these participants, it seems that past reciprocal friendships are an indicator of future success in making reciprocal friendships. Interestingly, both participants who experienced peer groups disruption due to institutional structure were boys.

Gender seemed to play a role in the type of peer group disruption the participants experienced. Even though they knew that their friends were going to a different school, it is almost as if Lance and Michael did not fully realize that they would be starting the school year as friendless. They may have assumed that they would just have friends. This is in sharp contrast to Tina and Lori, who were very aware of their lack of friends because these social dynamics were very much a part of their everyday school experience.

I assert that all the participants of this study belong to one of two categories, those who became friendless out of peer group disruption and those who were most likely friendless in elementary school and continued to be friendless into junior high. Tina and Lori, who experienced peer disruption due to social dynamics, both had friends in elementary school and

were both able to make friends by the end of the school year. Tina used the school counselor as a resource and Lori was able to connect to peers during classes and those peer connections turned into reciprocal friendships. Lance, who also had friends in elementary school and who experienced peer group disruption due to institutional structures, was able to make connections with peers, similarly to Lori, and one of those connections turned into a reciprocal friendship.

Data analysis suggests that the other five participants most likely did not have reciprocal friendships in elementary school. These students struggled to make friends in the new school environment and these are also the students that the school structure fails to support adequately. The school system appears to have resources to help students who become friendless due to peer disruption (e.g., counselors, partner and group work in classes, extra-curricular activities), but it does not have similar resources to help those students who continue to be friendless year after year. These students struggle with isolation and loneliness and need the school to help them, but never find the help they need. The findings from this study indicate future research should inquire into what schools could do to both help perpetually friendless students to form friendships and support them while at school.

### **Introverted, Extroverted and Socially Anxious Students**

The personality traits of introversion and extroversion have an on impact many different facets of behavior (e.g., Becker & Matteson, 1961; Eysenck, 1965, Fouts & Click, 1979; Lynn, 1959). It is important to note that both introverts and extroverts are socially oriented, but in different ways and tend to have different social needs. An introvert is someone who becomes emotionally drained when being around large groups of people. An extrovert is someone who is energized by being around groups of people and new meeting new people.

Although I did not initially intend to look at introversion and extroversion as a variation in friendlessness, it became clear through analysis that this aspect of the participants' personality trait as an extrovert or introvert was important in their ability to make friends. In many cases, introversion and extroversion turned out to be more important than self-efficacy in the participant's ability to make friends. I did not specifically test for the introversion/extroversion personality variable, but with most of the participants it became apparent through the interviews and my observations that some of the participants were more introverted and some were more extroverted. When talking about school activities and places with large groups of students, some participants were enthusiastic and seemed to get energized, while others talked about dreading being around large groups of students. Similarly, when I observed the participants at lunch some participants were hanging out with large groups of students who were talking loudly and being active. Other participants were sitting by themselves or with one of two other people drawing, reading, talking quietly, or watching the rambunctious students from a distance. One might think that social self-efficacy would be related to extroverted and introverted personality types, but that did not seem to be the case with the eight participants in this study. Future studies examining this relationship, and specifically the variable of introversion and extroversion, would be helpful in gaining a more nuanced understanding about how that personality variable affects the friendless student.

All of the participants that I identified as being more extroverted were able to form at least one reciprocal friendship by the end of the school year, and some of the introverted participants were able to form reciprocal friendships. The participants who were not able to form reciprocal friendships were those who were more introverted and also experienced social anxiety. Evan, Kylie, and Hannah explicitly expressed their dislike for big groups of students and

loud places in school and actively avoided both of those situations. This study raises the question about the combination of introversion and social anxiety and suggests that it can severely impact one's ability to make friends. These students need encompassing support to help them build friendships, so they can become happy, fulfilled people. The students that need to most support are the ones that appear to receive the least in the secondary environment. Additional studies comparing introverts who are friendless with those who have reciprocal friendships could also be extremely helpful, especially in looking at what resources help facilitate introverted and socially anxious students in making friends.

Because many opportunities to make friends at the junior high school setting present themselves in loud places with large groups of students, more introverted students like Evan and Kylie miss out on the opportunities to make friends that more extroverted students can take advantage of. Kylie and Evan express their desire to make friends, so it is clear that they do not just prefer to be alone all the time. They want to feel connected through friendship, but, being more introverted, they are not supported with their social needs in this institutional environment in making friends.

I do not mean to imply that introverts cannot make friends, or even have a more difficult time making friends in general, but that the school structure of junior high does not facilitate introverts in making friends. In junior high, students are around large groups of people for most of the day and students switch from class to class where they have to get acclimated to a new group of students only to switch again when they start to settle in. Most of the social activities are organized around the ideal of extroversion and involve large groups of students being loud (e.g., dances, assemblies, whole class parties). Both the school structure and the school social

activities are geared toward helping the extroverted personality type make friends, and may actually work to inhibit more introverted students from making significant friendships.

When analyzing the interviews for when and where students felt isolated and distressed, there were several places that came up over and over again, especially for the students that I identified as introverts. Introverted students reported to feel isolated in “loud classes” where the teacher does not seem to have “control of the class.” All of the students who I observed engaging in introverted behavior talked about feeling uncomfortable in those types of classes. Students also talked about taking themselves out of the typical lunchroom activities. Many students go outside after lunch and play games, run around, or talk loudly. As a teacher, I have gone into the lunchroom many times and it is a very loud place. Students are yelling and laughing as they eat lunch and when they finish eating many students go outside to continue yelling and laughing. As students leave, the lunchroom itself quiets down. Because the lunchroom gets a little less loud as students finish their lunches and go outside, it does not surprise me that many of the introverted participants stayed in the lunchroom to have some quiet time.

School dances and assemblies were also places talked about by introverted students as places that made them feel uncomfortable. Both places are loud and crowded. The teachers, counselors, and administrators that plan the “fun” activities, like assemblies and dances, might assume that because many junior high students like the crazy, loud atmosphere, that all junior high students are energized by a similar atmosphere. But, in fact, there is at least a portion of students that find that atmosphere uncomfortable. The introverted students might even find the social and reward activities intended to give them a break more stressful and anxiety-producing than regular school activities.



One way schools can help introverted students make friends is to include elements of the middle school model including podding (school-within-a-school) or a homeroom (Williams-Boyd, 2005). Schools can also offer reward or social activities that are more enjoyable for students who prefer quiet activities with more structure. Teachers can help introverted students make friends by using partner work and group work, especially when the students in the partnerships or groups stay the same over an extended period of time.

### **Role of the Adult at School**

The adults in the school play an important role in the experience of friendlessness for many of the participants. In these cases, two adult roles are particularly important; the role of an adult as a supportive resource and the role of an adult as a friend.

There is much written about how important it is for students to feel supported by the adults in the school (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Richman, Rosenfeld, & Bowen, 1998). Adult support is especially important for adolescents during a difficult transition (Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991). In this study we can see that Tina received support from an adult at school that specifically helped her in terms of friendlessness. When Tina experienced peer group disruption as a result of relational aggression she followed the example of her older sister and sought out the school counselor for help. The counselor was able to help Tina by giving her advice about moving on from the friends that she was having a problem with. Tina trusted the counselor as someone who was supportive and followed her advice. Trust is an essential component when talking about a supportive adult at school. If the student does not trust the adult, then the support the adult offers the student is not especially valuable. It is likely that because the school counselor had consistently been supportive of students, like Tina's older sister, Tina was able to trust her.

Another important adult role that is shown through this case study, is the role of teacher as friend. Hannah puts Ms. Jones in the friend category instead of simply in the teacher or resource category. Because Hannah has been rejected so often by her peers in the past, she could likely fear being rejected by her peers if she attempts to build a friendship with them. She desires to feel connected with someone at school, so she uses Ms. Jones as a substitute for a peer friendship. There is not the same fear of rejection from Ms. Jones because, inherent in the role of teacher, is social acceptance of students. While Ms. Jones will not likely reject Hannah, she also will not likely fully connect with her in the same way a peer friend would. Hannah's experience of substituting a teacher as a friend to mitigate her isolation speaks to the larger issue of how friendless students deal with the isolation and loneliness they feel while at school.

While Hannah softens her isolation by substituting a teacher for a peer friend. The other participants remained friendless for the entire school year or had other ways to relieve their friendlessness. Some students, like Kylie and Evan, make themselves busy in their isolation by reading a book or drawing. Other students, like Tyler, put themselves in places where they are around other people as to not appear isolated, but are not necessarily interacting or connecting. They each had a different way of coping. Some of the participants seemed happy with their coping strategies, while other did not.

### **Family Dynamics**

Family dynamics played a significant role in the experience of friendlessness for several participants. There are two important aspects of family dynamics that emerged as particularly relevant for these cases. The first is the presence of stressors that impeded the participants' ability to make friends at school. Both Hannah and Evan experience significant family disruption. Hannah's guardians are her aunt and uncle because her parents either abandoned her

or are no longer able to take care of her. We see family disruption with Evan due to an erratic custody schedule. It could be that because Hannah and Evan do not have a certain level of family stability, they may also struggle to create security through friendships at school. Some students may not have a family pattern that demonstrates how to create consistent, safe relationships engrained in who they are. These students may need more support in knowing how to create those relationships, or in opening up spaces where they can feel comfortable and safe in new relationships. It could also be that they are choosing, subconsciously or consciously, to not let people get too close in order to protect themselves from people knowing that they are experiencing family disruption.

The second aspect of family dynamics that affects these cases are instances in which the families are resources to their students and provided alternatives to friends at school. Having a family member at school, whether it be a sibling or parent, can help a student feel supported. It can also impede a student from making peer friendships as we see in the case of Lance. Lance is not forced, like most students, into social situations where it is apparent he is friendless because his mom is a teacher at the school and Lance can use her classroom as a safety net. If Lance does not have anywhere to go before school, he can go to his mom's classroom. If Lance does not have anyone to eat lunch with, he can do so in his mom's classroom. The safety net not only gives Lance a physical place to be, but it might also provide a feeling of connection, so he does not feel his isolation or loneliness so acutely. This is similar to what Hannah was experiencing with Ms. Jones—a student dulling isolation from peers with adult connection.

### **Further Research**

We still need more information about how students experience friendlessness. This case study allowed me to gain a detailed and nuanced understanding of how these diverse, friendless

7<sup>th</sup> students navigated junior high during their first year. Previous research has shown the impact of friendlessness, but did not give a detailed look at when, where, and how friendless students feel isolated or uncomfortable. By analyzing the transitional experience from elementary to secondary from the perspective of individual students, we have gained a greater understanding of what might be especially difficult, meaningful, and helpful for the friendless students. Isolation has far-reaching consequences and impacts many aspects of an adolescent's life. Because students spend so much of their time at school, educators and schools have a responsibility to attend to more than just the academic needs of every student, not just the students who naturally succeed in the school environment. More studies are needed that examine the experience from the perspective of the student.

Other studies that research the ways in which schools and teachers can support friendless, introverted students are needed. Typically, schools and teachers provide support for extrovert students in their ability to make friends, but that support is not as readily available for introverted students. Other studies are needed that look at ways to support students who are continually friendless as opposed to students who are situationally friendless due to peer group disruption in order to understand what schools and teachers can do to help said students.

Additionally, a study exploring the coping mechanisms friendless students use to deal with isolation and loneliness is needed. Understanding the many ways students manage their friendlessness could help schools and teachers better identify and support those students.

Every student, friended and friendless, deserves to not only be successful in school, but to thrive in a socially supportive environment. This study gives us insight into the experience of the friendless student. When we look at the experience from the perspective of the student, schools can learn what we can do to help these, sometimes overlooked students, thrive in schools.

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## APPENDIX A:

## Participant Selection Survey

1. Who are your three best friends who you hang out with at school?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. How long have you lived in Grapevine? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the answer that best shows how well you can do each of the following things.

3. How well can you express your opinions when your classmates disagree with you?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

4. How well can you become friends with other youth?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

5. How well can you have a conversation with an unfamiliar person?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

6. How well can you work in harmony with your classmates?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

7. How well can you tell other youth that they are doing something that you don't like?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

8. How well can you tell a funny event to a group of youth?

Not Very Well					Very Well
1	2	3	4		5

9. How well do you succeed in staying friends with other youth?

Not Very Well				Very Well
1	2	3	4	5

10. How well do you succeed in preventing quarrels with other youth?

Not Very Well				Very Well
1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX B:

## Phone or Email Script for Initial Parent Contact

My name is Rachel Neeley. I am an English teacher at Grapevine Junior High. I am currently getting my master's degree at Brigham Young University and I am doing some research at the junior high. Transitioning from elementary to junior high can be a difficult time for students. I am interested in understanding the experience of a seventh grader during the first year of junior high. I would love \_\_\_\_\_ to be a part of the study.

If \_\_\_\_\_ decides to be part of the study, I will interview them twice after school. The interviews will be tape recorded, so I can go back and look at the valuable information \_\_\_\_\_ gives me. I will not share the information from the interviews with anyone at school.

I think \_\_\_\_\_ could really be helpful in helping me understand what it is like for a seventh grader at Grapevine Junior High. Let me know what you think. I am happy to answer any questions or discuss any concerns.

## APPENDIX C:

## Parental Consent and Student Assent Forms

# Parental Permission for a Minor

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**Introduction**

My name is Rachel Neeley. I am a graduate student from Brigham Young University and a teacher at Grapevine Junior High. I am conducting a research study about the transition from elementary school to junior high. I am inviting your child to take part in the research because (he/she) is in seventh grade this year.

**Procedures**

If you agree to let your child participate in this research study, the following will occur:

- I will interview your child twice after school.
- The interviews will take place after school in the counseling center and will take thirty minutes to an hour. *A school counselor will be present during the interviews.*
- *The interviews will ask your child about their experiences at school, friendships at school, as well as friendships outside of school.*
- The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed.
- *I will also have informal interactions with your child as I see them at school and contact them via email. I will also have informal interactions with you through email and/or phone conversations.*

**Risks**

There is a risk of loss of privacy, which I will reduce by not using any real names or other identifiers in the written report. I will also keep all data in a locked file cabinet and on a non-public, password protected computer. At the end of the study, data will be used to more fully understand the experience of a seventh grader. After looking at and analyzing all the data, I will also write a thesis comparing the different students' school experiences.

*Because of the topics I ask about, there may be some discomfort caused by being asked some of the questions. I will reduce this risk by communicating to your child that they can answer only those questions that he/she wants to, or your child may stop the entire process at any time without affecting his/her standing in school or grades in class.*

**Confidentiality**

The research data will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the data. At the conclusion of the study, all identifying information will be removed and the data will be kept in a locked cabinet.

**Benefits**

*There are no direct benefits to your child if he/she chooses to participate.*

**Compensation**

There will be no compensation for participation in this project.



**Questions about the Research**

Please direct any further questions about the study to Rachel Neeley at 801-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or rachel.neeley@nebo.edu. You may also contact Erin Whiting at 801-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or erin.whiting@byu.edu.

Questions about your child's rights as a study participant or to submit comment or complaints about the study should be directed to the IRB Administrator, Brigham Young University, A-285 ASB, Provo, UT 84602. Call (801) 422-1461 or send emails to irb@byu.edu.

You have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

**Participation**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to decline to have your child participate in this research study. You may withdraw your child's participation at any point without affecting your child's standing in school.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Child Assent

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## **What is this research about?**

My name is Ms. Neeley and I am a student at Brigham Young University and a teacher at Grapevine Junior High. I want to tell you about a research study I am doing. A research study is a special way to find the answers to questions. We are trying to learn more about being a seventh grader. You are being asked to join the study because you are a seventh grader this year.

If you decide you want to be in this study, this is what will happen.

- I will interview you after school two different times. *A school counselor will be in the room during the interviews.*
- *The interviews will take thirty minutes to an hour and we will talk about school, friends at school, and friends outside of school.*
- I will tape record both interviews.

## **Can anything bad happen to me?**

*Because of the topics I ask about, you may not want to answer questions. You are free to not answer any question you do not want to answer.*

## **Can anything good happen to me?**

We don't know if being in this study will help you. But we hope to learn something that will help other people someday.

## **Do I have other choices?**

You can choose not to be in this study.

## **Will anyone know I am in the study?**

We won't tell anyone you took part in this study. When we are done with the study, we will write a report about what we learned. We won't use your name in the report.

## **What happens if I get hurt?**

Your parents/legal guardians have been given information on what to do if you feel uncomfortable during the study.

## **What if I do not want to do this?**

You don't have to be in this study. It's up to you. If you say yes now, but change your mind later, that's okay too. All you have to do is tell us.

Before you say yes to be in this study; be sure to ask Ms. Neeley tell you more about anything that you don't understand.

If you want to be in this study, please sign and print your name.

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D:

### Context Interview Questions and Picture Directed Interview Prompts

#### **Context Interview Questions**

I will ask the following types of questions during the first interview:

- Tell me about your family? Do you have brothers or sisters?
- How long have you lived in town? Where did you go to elementary school?
- What do you like to do outside of school?
- Do you like school? Why or why not? Have you always felt that way?
- Are you a good student?
- What is hard about school? What is easy about school?
- Tell me about your friends at school?
- Tell me about your friend outside of school?
- In terms of school, what are you worried about?
- Has it been easy or difficult for you to make friends so far this year?
- How have your friendships changed since coming to junior high?
- Has coming to junior high been difficult? What has been easy? Difficult?

**Picture Directed Interview Prompts**

I will use the following prompts to help students talk about each picture:

- What do you think of when you look at this picture?
- What types of experiences have you had (at the place pictured)?
- How does this picture make you feel?

## APPENDIX E:

## Code Examples for Each Participant and Number of Occurrences in the Data

Student Information	Where (+) N=63	Where (-) N=59	When (+) N=23	When (-) N=10
Lance Age: 13 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	In my math class, my – I met this guy...and he is really cool. And then his best friend from elementary school is like Zach and we all hang out. N=3	N=0	I enjoy the dances because everybody acts differently. Like people that are normal, like really quiet and shy at school are sometimes like really talkative or crazy at the dances. N=2	N=0
Tyler Age: 12 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	During first and second break I hang out with my friends in the hall. N=8	I avoid the 9th grade hall because of all the bad language. N=4	And then usually go outside and play football or Frisbee and then go to the next period after that. N=3	N=0
Lori Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	I usually arrive like ten or 15 minutes before the bell rings and then go and hang out in front of the orchestra room. N=11	I don't mind the eighth graders, but ninth graders are like big and scary, so it's kinda like I avoid trying to go in the ninth grade hall as much. N=10	My other friend, names Lexi, that we've become friends this year and we are in the same math class, so we get to work together a lot and it's pretty fun. N=8	I don't like staying inside the lunchroom. It's boring unless you're eating, so... N=5
Kylie Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	I usually draw at lunch. I usually eat pizza. And me and my friends just talk. N=9	That hall always gets so clogged up, and people just stand in the middle of it. And they'll go really slow and it just makes me stress because they don't know how to walk. N=11	Well, I met Hannah in my – in the – she's in my language arts class – so is Caitlin. N=5	N=0
Michael Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	We hang out in the seventh grade hall. N=8	It's a dance, but I never went to one because I just didn't want to go. I had wrestling practice and I just think they're kind of dumb because no one really dances at the, but, yeah. N=10	N=0	So like in elementary it was like just like easy – you know, like fun. Just like, do whatever you know. But then you like. Come here, and there's like – it's like you have to do this, this, this, this, this and this. N=1
Evan Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I like technology because the computer screen moves so much. N=6	I go kind of by myself to Quest Time. Sometimes I had – I would have a friend, but not very often. N=13	N=0	N=0
Tina Age: 11 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	The locker rooms is where my friends are, and so I like it there. N=9	In the back in that little area with – where most of the 9th graders are – in fact pretty much all of them are there – I don't go over there. I just don't go over there. It's, kinda, scary to me. N=3	And it's just fun because after he's (math teacher) done giving instructions and helping us out ...then we get to move wherever we want. N=1	I don't know, some classes are kind of boring. N=1
Hannah Age: 12 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	My favorite thing is seeing my friends at lunch, but that's practically the only time I can see them is at lunch. N=9	I hate it in the hallways. I get headaches easy; migraines easy. If I walk through the hallway, by the time I get to my next class, I'm like let me go dig a hole and die. N=8	That's the only time period (lunch) we get to spend together because I have no classes with them. None whatsoever. N=4	Come on people. You were supposed to learn how to walk in freakin before kindergarten, before preschool. N=3

Student Information	Conflict N=22	Self-Description of Personality or Abilities N=26	Relational Change (+) N=25	Relational Change (-) N=25
Lance Age: 13 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	N=0	It's been pretty easy for me to make friends because I've had a lot of the same classes with the same people. N=1	But then there's also – and I used to be like I just had like one or two really good friends and that was it. But now that I've come to junior high, I've kind of branch out more and get a larger friend group. N=3	All right, so I guess one thing with my best friend Karen like we still hang out now, but it's not as much. And so it's just like when we see each other it's a little bit different, you know, just because we've grown not a part but like differently. N=5
Tyler Age: 12 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	N=0	It hasn't been difficult for me to make friends this year because most of them I made from football and my mom says I'm very friendly and very talkative so. N=2	I've made new friends but I haven't like not seen any old friends, so I still have all my friends. N=1	N=0
Lori Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-efficacy	Yeah. We're friends – like we're friends, sort of, again now, but yeah. Yeah, it's kind of different because – just because we had the big fight and stuff, so – I don't really know what happened. N=4	It's easy for me to make friends, most of the time, so that's nice, and I don't know. N=2	My other friend, names Lexi, that we've become friends this year and we are in the same math class, so we get to work together a lot and it's pretty fun. N=3	Well, I was friends with this girl last year and we were pretty good friends, but just this year, she wasn't my friend anymore and it's kind of complicated. N=8
Kylie Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	N=0	I always listen to the teachers. I'm not loud. N=1	My friends are Izzy, Abby, Hannah, Jackie, and Caitlin. We have been friends since the beginning of the year. N=3	They – I used to have different friends, but they weren't in my classes, so now I have different friends. N=1
Michael Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I had to go to the front office because playing flag football I had to go in there because a kid was playing too rough and like so I was yelling at him and stuff. N=1	N=0	But then I like meet, new kids from playing football. N=2	N=0
Evan Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	There was a fight in a gym class – my gym class once, and two kids were about to start to fight. Everyone is surrounding them. Some of us were trying to stop it. N=4	It has been difficult for me to make friends. Just I've been going to a different school so I know everyone there, just not here. N=3	N=0	The friends that I was really good friends with I don't really hang out with them anymore. Just don't have much time or I'll get too distracted by the computer. N=2
Tina Age: 11 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I don't know, I just like because over the summer we like started getting in lots of fights over pretty much nothing. N=8	Interviewer: So has it been easy or difficult for you to make friends this year? Tina: Easy. N=1	I have Maddie and she kind of help me make friends, so it was pretty easy. N=1	Because I've also known a girl named Mry. We kind of split apart this year, like I don't know. She made new friends, I made new friends and like we just haven't talked or hung out for a while. N=7
Hannah Age: 12 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	All the kids used to grab my piggytails and pull me around. N=5	Interviewer: Why do people think you're shy? Hannah: Because I don't make friends easy, and it's all because of one experience. N=7	This is how I met Laura. I was under the table in Art trying to get away from the migraine makers. N=3	I don't sit with them at lunch at anymore. I don't have any classes with them. N=2

Student Information	Outside Friends N=11	Not Understanding N=13	Included N=40	Left Out N=59
Lance Age: 13 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	We talked about hanging out after school, but again we'd tried to, but some things come up every time. N=1	N=0	I come to lunch from Mrs. North's class...I get my lunch, and then I go sit with my friends and we just talk and eat. N=3	And then like from my elementary school, most of the kids went to Mapleton, so I have a lot of obstacles – N=1
Tyler Age: 12 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	I have friends that go to Mapleton. I have sleepovers on the weekends or go camping, sometimes go swimming. N=1	N=0	When the bell rings, me and my friends from fifth period usually try and hurry up to get lunch because our table fills up pretty fast. N=8	It was a little difficult at the beginning of the year because I only knew a couple of people because my team was split half in half...so I only knew a couple people here. N=2
Lori Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	I don't have very many friends that don't go to this school because they all mainly go to this school, but – well, I guess my cousin Ian goes to this school and – but yeah, he's pretty – we drive together every day, so we hang out after school and stuff. N=2	She (Sophie) became really good friends with this group of people that kind of didn't like me because – well, I don't really know why. N=7	My other friend, names Lexi, that we've become friends this year and we are in the same math class, so we get to work together a lot and it's pretty fun. N=3	At first, it was really easy, like I said, but then, as it goes on, it gets harder because it always seems like there's somebody who's against you, I guess, or who's not on your side, who's looking at you like you're weird. N=4
Kylie Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	I have a friend named Hannah, a friend named Emma. They don't go this school. They are younger than me. They are in 5th and 6th grade. I usually hang out with them every day of the week except Sunday, usually. N=2	N=0	I go outside with my friends: Hannah, Caitlyn, Izzy, Abby, Julia, Jack, and Jackie. N=4	Well, some students in P.E., I don't even know, and I don't really have any friends in there. I have like on eighth grader friend, except she's kind of bossy when it comes to sports. N=1
Michael Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I'm friends with them because I am just like on the same team with them are like I know them for a while or like just stuff like that. N=2	Yeah, I had to go in there because a kid stole markers and Ms. Wallace just took like all the boys in the class and just sent them up. So that was kind of weird. N=1	Well, I have friends in PE and in aerobics so we just go to Quest Time from there all together. N=7	I don't have anybody to dance with. I don't know if anybody would dance with me. N=1
Evan Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I have two really good friends I haven't seen much ever since I left the last school. N=1	Sometimes they're – a kid gets in trouble and then the person gets in trouble and they don't have much of a punishment – more of just a talking to. N=1	Yeah, I like the smaller classes. Everyone knows each other more. N=1	Interviewer: Why is it hard to be new? Evan: Just the friends. I only know, like, five people and one of them I actually went to school with in the other school. N=5
Tina Age: 11 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I have a friend that I ride horses with. Her name's Eden...and we're really close, but she's homeschooled. N=1	Cambry was, kinda, giving me and Jackie glares...and I went over and tried to talk to her. And she would turn away, or she would look at me. N=4	Well, I hang out with Tristy and them. And we, kind of, just play tag or something, or we take Tristy's shoes. And we play monkey in the middle with it. N=8	N=0
Hannah Age: 12 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	(talking about girls from church) We're friends at school too, but we hardly see each other since Leila is a 9th grader and Abby is an 8th grader...I'm friends with all of them, and you just don't get to see each other at school. N=1	N=0	We have a meeting spot (at lunch) and we always eat there. Always. N=6	I forced myself into the popular groups. I'd follow them around until they came attached to me, talked to me and stuff. I'd follow them around. N=9

Student Information	Safe N=22	Unsafe N=25	Hostile N=24	Positive Interaction with Adult N=17
Lance Age: 13 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	I definitely like the band room the most because it's just a totally different environment. Just like in other classes, a lot of times people are stressed out or like messing around. N=1	N=0	N=0	Oh I think it's like the adults here understand that it is a big transition. But I think that they like almost make too big a deal out of that. N=1
Tyler Age: 12 Male  High Social Self-Efficacy	All my friends from football are like in every period I have. N=1	I avoid the 9th grade hall because of all the bad language. N=2	N=0	N=0
Lori Age: 12 Female  High Social Self-efficacy	I like the P.E. room. I don't know why I feel most comfortable there. That's just where I do. N=4	There's just this big group of girls that always hang out with each other and they're all – like I see them in the halls, or at lunch, so they're just always together, and she's just a part of that group. N=5	Like there's one girl who's just talked about me behind my back, even though I never do anything to her, and she's just really mean to me, and so I always feel like she was kind of annoying. N=3	So I like my CTE classes because those – I think my favorite was like Mrs. Bird's class. N=2
Kylie Age:12 Female  High Social Self-Efficacy	And then, I also got in Mrs. Jackson's and she's really nice. Because she really doesn't get mad. She's really patient with the class. N=1	I feel stress because in seventh period there's these girls, and every time they go in there, they just get weirder and weirder...I mean, they're loud. N=1	N=0	And then, I also got in Mrs. Jackson's and she's really nice. Because she really doesn't get mad. She's really patient with the class. N=1
Michael Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I feel the most comfortable in the seventh grade hall because I have a friend in the seventh grade hall. N=1	But like ninth grade hall I'm just not in it very much, and everybody's like huge and stuff so. N=6	N=0	N=0
Evan Age: 12 Male  Low Social Self-Efficacy	Yeah, I like the smaller classes...If someone starts to get aggressive it's easier for the teacher to break it up. N=1	He's only a jerk in PE. You get adrenaline just walking in there. N=4	I hate the gym. It is full of jerks...a lot of the eighth graders say sevie's are stupid, so do the ninth graders. N=1	It's annoying some people that are too nice to – a lot of teachers seem to like the people that are more popular. The teachers treat them differently. They are nicer them. N=3
Tina Age: 11 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	It makes me think of my friend...we don't have any classes together...her locker's just right away from mine. N=4	N=0	N=0	They help (the counselors). They helped her (sister) when she was upset, so I thought I would give it a try and see if they could help me. N=2
Hannah Age: 12 Female  Low Social Self-Efficacy	I have a favorite teacher. She allows me to go talk to her after school to get my day out. N=9	They go like, well, you look like a geek. Oh yeah, I've been called that my whole life. N=7	Only one percent of the junior high students are good. N=20	I like helping the teachers. I have good relationships with all of my teachers. N=8