Chapter Four
How Parents Recreate and Reproduce the Boundaries

Alice is a White, upper-class mother with three children. She and her husband moved to TCS’s neighborhood 14 years ago because they had friends there. Alice found out about the public schools because a woman in her apartment building “took the plunge” and sent her children to public schools and was really “happy.” Growing up, Alice had attended excellent public schools in the Midwest and replies, “I really believe in the public school. I’m not a private school kind of person. I like the diversity. I like that the PTA and parents work really hard to provide extra enrichment kinds of programs . . . so that we can, you know, we feel like they’re getting the things that they might not otherwise get in public schools.”

Alice described other people in her social circle, including most of the parents at her children’s preschool, as having a “knee jerk reaction that if you’re in a certain income bracket, they didn’t even consider public school.” Nevertheless, she decided to enroll her oldest daughter in the G&T program at TCS and explained, “The people I knew who had gotten in [G&T] were really smart. They’re probably on par as smart or smarter, at least at that time, than a lot of her friends from [preschool] who had gone to private school. So I thought I’m not losing anything as far as intelligence or how quickly these kids pick up on anything by being in a G&T program.” Alice’s daughter has since graduated from TCS and is now enrolled in middle school. She shared that when her daughter started at TCS there was only one other family in her apartment building that sent their child to public school, but now it’s really changed and most people choose TCS over private school.

When it was time for her two younger sons to start kindergarten, Alice said she did not really consider other schools even though she was pretty sure they were not going to pass the G&T test because they were “totally disinterested” in the G&T workbook that she tried to practice with them. It ended up that her one son scored a 94 on the G&T test.
and because of sibling priority (from his sister), he was accepted into the G&T program for kindergarten. Her other son, however, did not make the 90th percentile score for siblings and was placed in the Gen Ed program for kindergarten. Alice had him retested and had made the switch for first grade.

When asked to describe the school, Alice explains that the two “programs, they really don’t have different curriculum. It’s just the pace maybe, the stage which they go through.” She also explained that her kindergarten son’s Gen Ed teacher was the same teacher that “my daughter had for kindergarten for G&T.” According to Alice and other White Gen Ed parents, this particular teacher has taught both G&T and Gen Ed for kindergarten and teaches the “kindergarten class like a G&T class” regardless if it’s Gen Ed. Alice says that the “whole make-up” of the Gen Ed class has changed a lot from when her daughter went through the program seven years ago because the White “neighborhood kids” did not want to go the Gen Ed route, and they did a lot of “busing in” from outside the district to fill those seats.

Alice makes a point to say that TCS was not a “neighborhood school that was going anywhere…[because] none of the neighborhood kids wanted to go there. It’s not a wealthy enough environment like [the other disproportionately White neighborhood schools]…where those are in fairly high real estate areas where you got a middle-class population and everyone’s fairly similar, and you know, they have parent involvement in ‘spades’ and ‘bring in lots of money.’ We don’t have that many—we have a small group of parents who are involved. It’s getting better, but you need that population base to really fill a public school that’s going to be able to offer the extra stuff that the DOE is taking away. So that’s what the G&T program did for [TCS], it brought in all the parents who wouldn’t otherwise be there. And that’s honestly I think why G&T started for many of these schools, it’s to keep the parent base, the local parent base in the school…and no matter how much I like the parents in [my son’s] Gen Ed class, and they’re sweet, they’re not really involved with raising money, for helping out, you know, at different functions at the school. I never see them.”

Alice goes on to say that she likes that the school is “diverse” but that the “G&T classes are honestly not that diverse” especially in terms of “minority diversity,” and it’s just “too bad.” When asked whether Black and Latino parents get their children tested for G&T, she responds by saying that “they just register for Gen Ed.” She leads the G&T school tours, and the “people on the tours are the parents who have options…for G&T or private and want to consider all of their options.” This points to how the G&T policy favors the most advantaged parents and sorts the least able