"All Schools Are Not Created Equal:" An Analysis of Public Comments on School Rezoning

Andrene J. Castro
Mitchell Parry
&
Genevieve Siegel-Hawley
Virginia Commonwealth University
United States

Abstract: Public opinion plays an important role in shaping the policy process. We examined public input in the form of written public comments to interrogate group expression and public values in school policymaking. Drawing on theoretical and methodological tenets of critical policy and critical discourse analysis, our study examined 3,339 written public comments across two school districts undergoing school rezoning, which is the process of drawing and redrawing school attendance boundaries. Our findings highlight the complexity of public opinion on rezoning policies related to 1) competing values and visions for school diversity, 2) racialized conceptualizations of community members' sense of belonging, and 3) forms of boundary maintenance used to discursively resist boundary changes by excluding students and families of

color from crucial resources. As more U.S. districts consider rezoning to balance the racial and/or economic composition of schools, this study contributes new insight into stakeholders' implicit and explicit racial attitudes, motivations, and values in response to rezoning's complex policy process.

Keywords: school rezoning; critical policy analysis; school desegregation; education politics

"Todas las escuelas no son creadas iguales:" Un análisis de los comentarios públicos sobre la rezonificación escolar

Resumen: La opinión pública juega un papel importante en la configuración del proceso político. Examinamos la opinión pública en forma de comentarios públicos escritos para cuestionar la expresión grupal y los valores públicos en la formulación de políticas escolares. Basándonos en los principios teóricos y metodológicos de la política crítica y el análisis crítico del discurso, nuestro estudio examinó 3339 comentarios públicos escritos en dos distritos escolares que se sometieron a la rezonificación escolar, que es el proceso de dibujar y volver a dibujar los límites de asistencia escolar. Nuestros hallazgos resaltan la complejidad de la opinión pública sobre las políticas de rezonificación relacionadas con 1) valores y visiones contrapuestos para la diversidad escolar, 2) conceptualizaciones racializadas del sentido de pertenencia de los miembros de la comunidad, y 3) formas de mantenimiento de límites utilizadas para resistir discursivamente los cambios de límites al excluir estudiantes y familias de color de recursos cruciales. A medida que más distritos de EE. UU. consideran la rezonificación para equilibrar la composición racial y/o económica de las escuelas, este estudio aporta nuevos conocimientos sobre las actitudes, motivaciones y valores raciales implícitos y explícitos de las partes interesadas en respuesta al complejo proceso de políticas de rezonificación.

Palabras-clave: rezonificación escolar; análisis crítico de políticas; desegregación escolar; política educativa

"Todas as escolas não são criadas iguais": Uma análise dos comentários públicos sobre o rezoneamento escolar

Resumo: A opinião pública desempenha um papel importante na formação do processo político. Examinamos a opinião pública na forma de comentários públicos escritos para interrogar a expressão do grupo e os valores públicos na formulação de políticas escolares. Com base nos princípios teóricos e metodológicos da política crítica e da análise crítica do discurso, nosso estudo examinou 3.339 comentários públicos escritos em dois distritos escolares em processo de rezoneamento escolar, que é o processo de desenhar e redesenhar os limites da frequência escolar. Nossas descobertas destacam a complexidade da opinião pública sobre as políticas de rezoneamento relacionadas a 1) valores e visões concorrentes para a diversidade escolar, 2) conceituações racializadas do sentimento de pertencimento dos membros da comunidade e 3) formas de manutenção de limites usadas para resistir discursivamente às mudanças de limites, excluindo estudantes e famílias de cor de recursos cruciais. À medida que mais distritos dos EUA consideram o rezoneamento para equilibrar a composição racial e/ou econômica das escolas, este estudo contribui com novos insights sobre as atitudes, motivações e valores raciais implícitos e explícitos das partes interessadas em resposta ao complexo processo de política do rezoneamento.

Palavras-chave: rezoneamento escolar; análise crítica de políticas; desagregação escolar; política educacional

"All Schools Are Not Created Equal": An Analysis of Public Comments on School Rezoning

Public participation is an important component of local school district policymaking. It can improve public buy-in around school district decisions, reveal shared or common values, or help educational leaders better identify stakeholder needs (Dorner, 2011; Henig, 2011; Livermore et al., 2018). Public opinion also plays a crucial role in shaping the policy process, from problem identification to public engagement to policy implementation and monitoring (Kingdon, 2003).

One way to study these dimensions of the policymaking process is to analyze public comments from residents speaking at public meetings (Bertrand & Sampson, 2020; Sampson & Bertrand, 2020) or town halls (Tracy & Durfy, 2007). However, there are physical and emotional barriers associated with public commenting at such forums. Participation in public meetings often necessitates additional time, resources, or social capital to navigate the innerworkings of local politics (Collins, 2021). These meetings are also tightly structured with prearranged speakers or strict time limits, discouraging spontaneous commenting or lengthier contextualization of policy issues. Researchers are also limited by smaller sample sizes, making cross-case analysis difficult because residents are usually from the same city (Collins, 2021).

In this study, we leverage a unique data set of *written* public comments submitted through online district surveys or at the conclusion of face-to-face meetings. In theory, written public comments should increase public participation, especially among marginalized groups, because there are fewer barriers to submitting a written public comment either in person, online, or at a meeting. Additionally, written public comments, unlike verbal comments, enable communities of color to voice concerns without threat, white intimidation, or racial microaggressions (Collins, 2021; Sampson & Bertrand, 2020). Yet despite broader engagement in other disciplines (e.g., Livermore et al., 2018; Pang & Lee, 2008; Shapiro, 2011), educational policy scholars have underexamined written public comments to interrogate group expression in school policymaking.

We critically examined 3,339 public comments from two neighboring school districts, one urban and one suburban, undergoing rapid demographic shifts where school board and district officials sought to address racial and/or socioeconomic diversity, among other priorities, through rezoning. In current scholarship on school rezoning, researchers have focused on public sentiment gathered from only a small sample of participants (Bartels & Donato, 2009) or from a single source or district (Abel, 2012; Siegel-Hawley, Bridges & Shields, 2017). Rezoning, sometimes referred to as redistricting, is defined as the process of drawing and redrawing school attendance boundaries. Rezoning is one of multiple policy levers used to pursue enrollment balance when schools are over or under enrolled and, increasingly, to minimize racial or economic segregation by (re)distributing students and resources more equitably across schools and districts (Richards, 2014; Tannenbaum, 2013). In the aftermath of *Parents Involved*, a Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the use of students' race/ethnicity in school assignment, rezoning schools based on the racial/ethnic makeup of neighborhoods is one of few race-conscious policies for addressing racial and economic segregation in schools (Frankenberg et al., 2017; Saporito & Van Riper, 2016).

As more districts across the US (e.g., the District of Columbia, New York City, and Howard County, Maryland) use rezoning to balance school racial and/or economic composition, understanding what values, or the "abstract concepts of what is right, worthwhile, or desirable" (Donner, 2011, p. 584), are most salient to parents and community members can help school leaders identify strategies for engaging the public, anticipate concerns, and incorporate frameworks for authentic and constructive dialogue. To unpack stakeholders' values about school rezoning, we applied theoretical and methodological insights from critical policy and critical discourse analysis,

which jointly offer a lens to examine public comments as both "text" and "discourse"—the explicit or implicit meanings embedded in spoken or written language (Gee, 2011). Our analysis addressed the following questions: 1) What values were used to justify community stakeholders' support or opposition to school rezoning in written public comments submitted across two school districts? 2) How do these values shed light on the challenges, benefits, and limits of school rezoning? 3) What do these values reveal about race and class politics in school rezoning?

Our findings extend previous research on public participation in educational policy (e.g., Bertrand & Sampson, 2020; Collins, 2021; Sampson & Bertrand, 2020; Tracy & Durfy, 2007) by highlighting public values undergirding school rezoning. We identified commenters' competing values and visions for school diversity, which were heavily shaped by districts' rezoning goals and processes. Findings also reveal subversive discourses underpinning opposition to rezoning as middle- and upper-class white families framed these discourses in terms of what they would "lose" under rezoning. Subsequently, advantaged families sought to limit others' access to crucial resources through "boundary maintenance" (Louie, 2016, p. 5) or hoarding opportunities (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018), forming oppositional coalitions and interest groups (Henig, 2011), or by rejecting rezoning proposals designed to desegregate schools and lessen concentrated poverty. Collectively, this study offers new insight on public expression in educational policymaking.

Background Literature

School Rezoning

Research on school rezoning is a small but emerging body of work grounded in literature on school neighborhood effects, school (de)segregation, and studies on educational inequality (Dumas, 2011; Fiel, 2015; Frankenberg et al., 2017; Holzman, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Milner et al., 2016; Orfield & Luce, 2010). Prior rezoning studies offer mixed findings (Orfield & Luce, 2010; Richards, 2014; Siegel-Hawley, 2013). Two large-scale studies on school gerrymandering—relying on the same dataset but using different methods—produced conflicting evidence on the relationship between attendance zones and racial/ethnic segregation. One found that irregularly shaped school attendance boundaries were linked to increased integration (i.e., school officials drew oddly shaped zones to promote diversity; Saporito & Van Riper, 2016), while the other concluded that irregularly shaped zones were linked to increased segregation (Richards, 2014). Additional evidence shows that school officials in a suburban district redrew regularly shaped attendance boundaries in a way that increased segregation, further confirming that the shape of school zones matter (Siegel-Hawley, 2013). Collectively, these studies emphasize the restrictive or expansive potential of methods used to redraw attendance boundaries to desegregate schools.

Another body of research, mostly qualitative case studies, explores the processes and racial politics of school rezoning. Studying rezoning in Hillsborough County Public Schools during 2008–2009, Lazarus (2010) offered key insight on how school leaders can cultivate support for rezoning initiatives through transparent community engagement and design processes, while balancing diversity imperatives alongside cost, transportation, and efficiency priorities. Researchers studying rezoning in a suburban Colorado district highlight how these concerns (e.g., cost, transportation, and efficiency), along with class size, academics, and student safety, can be discursively used to resist rezoning (Bartels & Donato, 2009). Thus, analysis of public rezoning comments necessitates careful attention to technical claims embedded in processes of power (Horsford, 2019). It also demands close scrutiny of "disguised forms of racist discourse in public and virtual contexts" (Hughey & Daniels, 2013, p. 334) since constituents might use legitimate concerns to mask resistance to school boundary changes.

Discursive resistance is identified in studies of middle and upper-class, white families' aversion to schools and neighborhoods with greater racial and ethnic diversity (Hernández, 2019; Holme, 2002; Lareau, 2014; Posey-Maddox, 2014; Wells et al., 2018) as well as studies showing that white and affluent families are central actors in rezoning efforts, often seeking to influence the process by preserving educational privilege for their children (Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Holme et al., 2013; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2020). Although communities of color are active agents in the rezoning process and have resisted policy efforts that screen off educational resources and opportunity (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Freelorn, 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017), white and affluent families wield disproportionate power in school district politics and policymaking, ultimately undermining communities of color engagement and deliberation in the process.

Public Engagement in Local Educational Policymaking

Henig (2011) regards public engagement as "working collectively with others to find common ground and structure joint solutions" (p. 53). Public participation in local decision-making improves school officials' interaction with the public, especially when policy issues are uncertain, complex, and polarizing. Dorner (2011), drawing on insights from Boyd (1976), contends school policy processes can be enhanced by understanding parents' and community members' values as expressed through their "zone of tolerance," that is, the latitude or trade-offs they are willing to grant in policymaking. Viewing public comments as a window to glean these values or zones of tolerance, we argue that school leaders can better evaluate and communicate difficult policy trade-offs and non-negotiable criteria with stakeholders to produce "unbiased, evenhanded, and fair" rezoning outcomes (Lazarus, 2010).

As previously suggested, some actors (i.e., individuals, interest groups, or advocacy organizations) may have greater resources to lobby and advance political interests, often at the expense of racial equity (Ballinger & Crocker, 2020; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; Martin & Varner, 2017). School officials therefore must be cautious of how power is wielded throughout the public commenting process. Examining stakeholder rationales in Clark County School District's decentralization process, Diem and Sampson (2020) illustrate a general disregard for racial, economic, and linguistic equity when concerns from affluent, white, and English-speaking constituents were prioritized over those of other stakeholders. This type of unevenness in public input can result in "ethnic paternalism, a logic often used by members of ethnic majorities to justify restrictive policy decisions on the basis of what they think is best for the affected population" (Fitzgerald, 2011, p. 371). Studying public comments can therefore shed light on whose voices and input are *not* part of public deliberation on educational policy (Dorner, 2011).

Another consideration is the extent to which public comments are incorporated in the policy process. Prior work suggests public comments may not lead to significant changes in agency regulation (Golden, 1998) and can be used as a tool for political expediency, rather than authentic democratic engagement (Hampton, 2009). Additionally, policymakers may place too much attention on public opinion at the cost of preserving the public good (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013). Indeed, calculating the costs or benefits of public values and preferences may depend on "whether they are congruent or incongruent with an option" (Hampton, 2009, p. 234). Accordingly, there is an underlying politics of public commenting that legitimates which values and discourses are rejected or upheld. This politics also dictates whether school officials and board members align with a particular viewpoint to avoid the costs of public rejection or political damage (Hampton, 2009).

Framework: Public Comments as Critical Discourse

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a methodology and form of inquiry concerned with examining "language in use" (Gee, 2011). A critical approach—critical discourse analysis (CDA)—views discourse as text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1995) by considering language use, the relationship between text and context, and how language and texts exert influence on people's beliefs, knowledge, or identities (Fairclough, 2011). Through language, CDA insists on uncovering the contradictions, power structures, and meaning-making processes imbued in discourse (Fairclough, 2011; Gee, 2011, Rogers et al., 2005). It is especially useful to investigate implicit or explicit meanings, values, and assumptions since "language favors specific values, ideas, and practices over others" (Welsh et al., 2019, p. 507). We apply CDA to examine the values commenters express about school rezoning and the discursive approaches interwoven in their written comments.

Table 1

Conceptual Framework

Concerns of Critical Policy Analysis	Elements of Critical Discourse Analysis
● Concerned with differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality	● Discourse analysis is reflexive (between the researcher and the text), interpretive, descriptive, and explanatory
● Concern regarding the policy, its roots, and its development	● Discourse is situated and historical
● Concern with the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge as well as the creation of policy "winners" and "losers"	● Discourse uncovers power relations
● Concern regarding social stratification and the broader effect a given policy has on relationships of inequality and privilege	● Discourse is embedded in society and culture (social practices)
● Concern regarding the nature of resistance to or engagement in policy by members of non-dominant groups	● Discourse is ideological and commits to addressing social issues

Critical Policy Analysis

Critical policy analysis (CPA) bears similar theoretical and methodological aims as CDA (See Table 1); however, it is "grounded in the belief that it is absolutely crucial to understand the complex connections between education and the relations of dominance and subordination in the larger society—and the movements that are trying to interrupt these relations" (Apple, 2019, p. 276). Researchers engaging in CPA amplify policies as texts of production, representation, and consumption to consider power differentials, inequality, and distribution of resources—each of which are critical concerns regarding how the public articulates individual and collective values when responding to or implementing policy (Diem et al., 2014; Sampson & Diem, 2020; Young & Diem, 2017).

Lester and colleagues (2016) describe CPA as a "comprehensive toolkit" to locate education policy alongside other theories, disciplines, and research areas, especially when policies, like school rezoning, are presented as apolitical, colorblind, or neutral. Indeed, CDA and CPA reject taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the public commenting process that *all* parents are equally welcome to comment and have their voices heard. Another critical concern of CPA highlights social stratification and ways policy development, implementation, and outcomes unfold in different environments influenced by factors like race/ethnicity, income, gender, ability, language, or citizenship (Diem et al., 2014). With a specific focus on race/ethnicity and class, we consider these critical concerns, while attending to Horsford's (2019) caution against an approach to CPA that ignores white racial policy interests and liberal ideals of diversity and integration.

Together, CDA and CPA illuminate how language is used in public comments to reveal political values and policy conflicts. The collective discourse emerging from public comments become important meaning-making sources to frame policy problems (i.e., school segregation and diversity) and guide policy engagement and implementation. Importantly, these discourses signal which policy actors, actions, and values are prioritized and help identify mechanisms, discursive or otherwise, that legitimates power and educational inequities within the policymaking process (Picowar & Mayorga, 2015; Young & Diem, 2017).

Methods

Data Sources

Data for this study come from a larger mixed-methods project on two school rezoning initiatives in Virginia during 2019-2020. The dataset included a total of 3,339 written public comments collected from multiple avenues (i.e., public meetings, online surveys, or emails) and across different timepoints or phases in each district's rezoning process (see Table 2). In Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS), we examined 2,574 comments collected after October 15, 2019, a critical juncture in creating rezoning options based on public input. We also analyzed 765 comments collected in Richmond Public Schools (RPS). Both sets of data did not include specific demographic or personal information about commenters, rather they indicated the magisterial district (discussed below), neighborhood, or the schools commenters attended or were affiliated with (See Appendix A). Districts were selected based on several criteria including: current engagement with rezoning process (largely at the same time), districts' suburban and urban contexts, and researchers' proximity to districts. Additionally, both districts used the same technical consultant, but designed their rezoning process using different criteria and engagement strategies. These circumstances presented unique conditions for a comparative case study.

District Contexts

Richmond Public Schools

RPS is an urban, city school district located in Richmond, Virginia. RPS enrolled 25,212 students in 2019-2020, of which approximately 63% were Black, 19.3% Hispanic/Latinx, 14.2% white, 2.3% mixed race, and 1.1% Asian (Table 2). About half of RPS students identify as low-income (55%) and 12.6% are English language learners (ELLs). The district is informally divided into five geographical regions (northside, east end, southside, west end, and city center) representing a total of nine school board seats.

To address several district priorities, leaders outlined multiple rezoning goals at the school board's February 2019 meeting. These included: 1) engage the community in the rezoning process by, for example, providing multiple feedback loops and commenting opportunities; 2) develop new

zones for RPS schools that improve the student experience in multiple ways by increasing student diversity of all kinds; 3) develop a plan for vacant and non-instructional properties; and 4) update the RPS facilities plan (RPS, 2020).[1]

Each of these four goals were tied to additional objectives (RPS, 2020), but the political process surrounding rezoning quickly shifted to addressing racial and economic segregation in three RPS elementary schools. These elementary schools—Mary Munford (west end), William Fox (city center), and Linwood Holton (northside)—together enrolled 895 of 1252 of all white RPS elementary students (approximately 70%). By contrast, the average RPS elementary school enrolled fewer than 60 white students (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2021a). To address this hyper-segregation, RPS' rezoning options included a system of elementary school pairing, which is a type of rezoning plan that encompasses multiple neighborhoods to yield expanded zones to create a more diverse school zone. For example, two elementary school attendance zones would be combined to produce a single, larger zone. Under RPS' proposed plan, designed by an external contractor, the larger zone would encompass two schools serving K-2 and Grades 3-5. Pairing options were designed to integrate up to seven elementary schools by adjusting grade configurations so students from previously separate and racially identifiable schools would be together throughout the elementary years. Despite the district's broader rezoning objectives of addressing a wide range of policy issues, these extant goals were sidelined, if not usurped, by community members' responses to pairing.

Henrico County Public Schools

HCPS is a large suburban district adjacent to the City of Richmond's west, north and east sides. In 2019-2020, HCPS enrolled 51,786 students, of which 36.7% were white, 35.8% were Black, 11.8% were Asian, 10.7% were Hispanic/Latinx, 4.7% were mixed race, and less than one percent (1%) were American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students. Approximately 41% of HCPS students identify as low-income and 6.8% are ELLs (Table 2). Over the last decade, racial/ethnic demographics have increasingly shifted as data show a rapidly declining white student population[2].

Although the district appears relatively diverse, Henrico county and most of its school magisterial districts (MDs) are racially and socioeconomically divided. This division parallels the county's eastern and western regions. The east end of HCPS enrolls a substantial majority of the district's Black students (approximately 70%), compared to the west end. Similarly, the percentage of low-income students in the east end (60.3%) is almost double the percentage in the district's west end (33.6%). These two geographical regions are segmented into five MDs: Fairfield and Varina in the east and Brookland, Three Chopt, and Tuckahoe in the west.[3] Racial and ethnic diversity across these five MDs also ranges widely. Tuckahoe enrolls more white students (61.0%) and more Asian students (25.2%) than any other zone, while Brookland enrolls more Black students (25.4%) than Three Chopt (10.9%) and Tuckahoe (12.6%) combined. Brookland also enrolls the largest population of low-income students in the west end at 14.6%, compared to 10% low-income students in Three Chopt and 9.1% in Tuckahoe.

---

[1] In this study, we highlight key objectives; additional goals are outlined in "Rezoning Goals and Objectives" (RPS, 2020).

[2] In 2009, for example, white student enrollment was 45.2%, while Asian (6.5% in 2009) and Latinx (4.9% in 2009) student enrollment has grown in the past decade.

[3] In Henrico, it is possible to attend a school in a magisterial district different from the one in which you live. In this case, constituents vote for a school board member that does not represent their child's zoned school.

These differences in race/ethnicity and students' socio-economic status, along with new school buildings to accommodate population growth in the district's west end, prompted the district's rezoning process. The stated goals of the redistricting project sought to: 1) efficiently use all available space and planning for future county growth; 2) determine attendance boundaries for an expanded elementary school (west end); 3) account for the increased building capacity for two renovated high schools (one on the east end and the other in the west); and 4) reduce concentrations of poverty within schools (HCPS, 2019). Despite racial/ethnic segregation and unequal resources across the two geographical regions, there were no rezoning options along the east-west border or in affluent, largely white enclaves in the far west end. Additionally, there were no provisions or explicit goals in rezoning proposals attempting to redistribute resources between districts in the east and west (HCPS, 2019).

Table 2

District Demographic Profiles and Data (2019-2020)

	RPS		**HCPS**	
Race	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Black	15,855	62.9%	18,559	35.8%
White, not of Hispanic origin	3,581	14.2%	18,985	36.7%
Hispanic	4,863	19.3%	5,517	10.7%
Asian	288	1.1%	6,123	11.8%
Mixed Race	568	2.3%	2,436	4.7%
American Indian/Alaska Native	53	0.2%	119	0.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	3	-	47	0.1%
Total Student Count	25,212	100%	51,786	100%
English language learners	3,184	12.6%	3,520	6.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	13,860	55%	21,223	41%
Schools by Level				
Elementary		25		46
Middle		7		12
High		5		9

Source: Virginia Department of Education. (2021a)

Data Analysis

Public comments were downloaded from each district's rezoning website, then organized in spreadsheets and uploaded into separate databases to Dedoose—a qualitative software. Data were organized by school attendance zones or MDs, school, feedback type, and residential or neighborhood subdivision, if applicable. These descriptive categories were relevant because commenters were not asked their identity or other demographic information (e.g., racial or ethnic identity, age, gender, SES, etc.), therefore we linked comments to school and neighborhood contexts to examine the discursive dimensions of place and space (Butler & Sinclair, 2020). These neighborhood affiliations shed light on specific concerns associated with certain neighborhoods or residential subdivisions, particularly in Henrico where some comments were devised and disseminated by neighborhood coalitions or homeowner's associations.

Data analysis included a systematic process of classifying texts (public comments) using multiple coding procedures, analytic techniques, and identifying emerging themes and patterns. We first used inductive and deductive coding techniques, drawing on the literature and the data to generate a reliable coding structure. For example, codes such as "proximity," "school culture" or "emotionality" were derived from existing studies (e.g., Holme, 2002; Lareau; 2014; Posey-Maddox, 2014; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017), while codes like "diversity" (with sub-codes for race and socioeconomic status), "resources," and "power" align with the theoretical framework. Other codes such as "conception of place" or "prior redistricting" were data-based codes informed by commenters' responses (See Appendix B). We also included evaluation codes to reflect commenters' sentiments about the rezoning process as positive, negative, or neutral. Evaluation codes "assign judgements about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 76) and were useful for addressing research question two (i.e., How do these arguments frame the challenges, benefits, and limits of school rezoning?). Following Fitzgerald's (2011) approach, "positive" comments reflected constructive or supportive aspects of the rezoning process, while "negative" comments were critical of the process, focusing primarily on its downsides. Some comments were coded as neutral because they posited no position (e.g., "I prefer options C or D, but not A or B"; "Thank you for all your hard work!") or, at times, discussed both positive and negative aspects of the process. Overall, this combined coding approach allowed us to capture insights potentially overlooked in prior research.

Due to the large quantity of comments (*N*= 3,339), we randomly selected 10% of these coded data to create a subsample for in-depth thematic analysis. This narrowing technique is a common procedure used in studies on written public comments (Haynes-Maslow et al., 2018), yielding 75 comments in Richmond and 765 in Henrico (Table 3). Using CPA and CDA, we then identified broad emergent themes by describing the subjective meaning of comments, paying close attention to its cultural-contextual messages—the role of race/ethnicity, socioeconomics, and power as key factors shaping support or opposition to school rezoning (Fairclough, 2011; Rogers 2011; Young & Diem, 2017). Critical analysis helps to answer the "what" and "how" questions posed in this study as well as the public values underlying the politics of rezoning (Siegel-Hawley, 2013).

Table 3

Public Comments Collected and Analyzed by District (2019-2020)

Public Comments Analyzed	RPS	HCPS
Total Comments	765	2574
Total in Subsample	75	259

Numerous steps were taken to establish trustworthiness. First, two researchers (the first and second authors) underwent three rounds of inter-rater reliability to establish coder agreement and to clarify, revise, or refine codes along the way. After codes were checked and debriefed with external researchers, a third coder was trained to code the data, similarly undergoing inter-rater reliability to help build a collaborative process and reliable outcomes. Additionally, each coder drafted short analytical memos, which were later re-read and combined to inform thematic categories. The coding team, along with the third author, who was deeply embedded in RPS' rezoning effort as a parent and researcher, engaged in regular debriefing over several months as the data were coded and analyzed.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, although we linked some geographical information to comments across neighborhoods, our analyses lack commenters' demographic and precise residential information, which may explain how factors like race/ethnicity, income, educational attainment or occupational levels influence their values. Relatedly, without identifying information tied to comments, a downside of this approach is that commenters may submit more than once, potentially skewing the process. This casts doubt on the degree to which comments are representative of actual public opinion.

Secondly, we do not offer casual claims about the role public opinion played in districts' rezoning outcomes. Specifically, in RPS, the school board voted not to include pairing, but it did approve a set of new elementary school zones, which marginally sought to address segregation. Additionally, we were unable to identify final outcomes in Henrico since rezoning was halted and then radically curtailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not clear whether public opinion shaped HCPS' decision to postpone and subsequently limit the process. This point is emphasized in other studies of public comments (e.g., Hampton, 2009) since districts did not clarify how comments were used to inform outcomes.

Findings

This research interrogated public values by exploring how the public articulated support or opposition to rezoning. We found that comments in both districts were largely resistant to rezoning, despite different contexts. This study illustrates that public values are tethered to race and class politics that shape discourses of resistance. These discourses reflect conflicting values regarding race and diversity, conceptualizations of place and space, and ways commenters exercised power—as forms of boundary maintenance—to hoard or exclude educational opportunity. We discuss these salient themes below, highlighting differences in each district, although themes were largely consistent across the two contexts.

Competing Visions of Diversity

Race-evasive Goals

In Henrico, commenters conceptualized diversity based on rezoning goals around efficiency, utilizing new school buildings, and reducing concentrations of poverty. Some comments were supportive of rezoning (e.g., "It is clear to me that the "E" options continue to be the only options that are making any attempt to reduce the concentrations of poverty at Tucker"), but the race-evasive goal of reducing concentrations of poverty may have constrained discourses about race. Supportive comments also critiqued rezoning options perceived as contradictory to reducing concentrations of poverty. Numerous HCPS comments from the Tuckahoe MD, which enrolled more white students (61.0%) and more Asian students (25.2%) than other MDs, questioned the rationale for rezoning neighborhoods with fewer low-income students to schools with already low rates of economic disadvantage. A comment involving two Tuckahoe high schools illustrates this tension:

> The economic disadvantage rate at Godwin is 16% vs. 31% at Freeman, so it will negatively impact Freeman [by taking] high home value neighborhoods and moving them to Godwin, which has less economically disadvantaged students...this change does not align with the stated goal of redistricting to 'reduce concentrations of poverty'...

Shifting some middle-and upper-class families to Godwin, a majority white (64%) school in HCPS, seemed to conflict with the district's aims.

Another comment similarly rejected a rezoning plan shifting students from Tuckahoe to Three Chopt MDs:

> In moving the Crestview neighborhood to Tucker [High School], you will be attempting to solve one problem regarding poverty concentrations. Yet you will be creating another, bigger problem…The Crestview neighborhood is one of the most diverse in the west end… Freeman will maintain its excellent status and also become a much more exclusively white demographic. It will be like you are going back in time to old Richmond's segregationist policies. Henrico County should not want or stand for that.

Here, the commenter signals past segregationist policies casting a shadow on Richmond and Henrico and views the current diversity within the Crestview neighborhood as a remedy to this troubling history. With enrollment at Crestview Elementary School at 49.5% white, 11.0% Black, 25.4% Latinx, and 9.2% Asian—one of the most diverse schools in Tuckahoe MD—commenters viewed Crestview Elementary a critical channel to maintain or boost diversity at Freeman High School, which unlike Crestview, enrolled 61.7% white, 12.3% Black, 14% Latinx, and 7.2% Asian students. Indeed, many commenters rejected rezoning options on the basis that some schools would result in higher enrollment of "WHITER [emphasis in original] and more affluent students" or those resulting in "a much more homogeneous school, both racially and socioeconomically." Although community members critiqued the hyper-segregation of white students at some HCPS schools arguing that "it is out of line with the redistricting goals," they also opposed rezoning plans to schools, like Tucker, that enrolled more students of color and low-income students. Furthermore, many commenters, as well as district leaders, failed to address the notable disparities in concentrations of poverty between the east and west regions of the county, leaving these broader inequities intact.

When Segregated Schools are "Already Diverse"

In Richmond, we identified overall greater support for improving racial and socioeconomic diversity, as commenters stated that "pairing will solve multiple problems" or that rezoning would "improve the overall community" since school demographics would better reflect city demographics. Another comment supportive of pairing stated: "I support the Cary/Fox pairing. There is strong evidence that combining mixed racial and economic communities improves the overall community."

However, like responses in HCPS, opposition to pairing far outweighed support in the public comments. RPS commenters framed their opposition to rezoning by critiquing various aspects of the process or its potential outcomes. Some felt the process "seems very rushed and not well proven that it will accomplish any of the desired objectives without causing greater issues." Others cited technical concerns, noting "we need more time" and "slowing down the process would ensure we have all of the data, costs, implementation, logistics versus rushing through this process." As in Henrico, written comments also reflected perceived conflicts with other rezoning goals. Comments noted that pairing did not reflect "natural boundaries" or that "it will cost the city more to bus kids further away," therefore, district officials should "improve struggling schools with more resources instead of bussing kids around." Several comments also referred to a 2013 RPS rezoning effort, noting that "students will suffer if it [rezoning] isn't done right." Although district officials set

an ambitious timeline, commenters suggested that the pace of rezoning might limit buy-in from families and RPS staff, ultimately undermining district goals of racial and socioeconomic diversity.

Across both districts, we partly attribute competing notions of diversity to leadership and administrative processes that failed to adequately outline key rezoning aims, steps, and outcomes for racial and socioeconomic diversity. The public had no metric for defining or measuring diversity, thus conceptualizations of diversity were vague, often with whiteness at the center. Indeed, many commenters claimed that their schools were already diverse, and therefore, should not be rezoned (e.g., "Fox is already diverse" [RPS]; "Crestview contributes diversity to the community" [HCPS]). Yet the bulk of these comments, according to school enrollment data, were divorced from overall district demographics and enrolled majority white students. These schools were also linked to residential areas or neighborhoods with mostly white and middle-to-upper class families.

Without clear goals pinpointing the drivers and causes of racial and economic segregation in schools, comments like "we aren't the cause of the problems, so we shouldn't be the ones moved" demonstrated community members' narrow zone of tolerance regarding rezoning and their collective values about diversity and integration. Establishing diverse schools was an overarching goal (among several) of each district's rezoning initiative, but what constituted diversity in these heavily segregated districts was loosely defined. This lack of clarity also made it difficult to assess some commenters' final stance on rezoning, despite their professed value for diversity. Without identifying race/ethnicity, SES, or other markers of diversity, these comments reflected broad narratives of diversity that, ultimately, reinforced the ambiguity of diversity discourse. As such, in the absence of clear guidelines and specifications for diverse outcomes and measurements, diversity became "an elusive, moving quota" (Berrey, 2005, p. 164) with tensions and incongruous values undergirding it.

Diversity vs. School Quality

Comments across both districts also resisted rezoning efforts by framing the drawbacks of rezoning based on school accreditation. That is, efforts to rezone schools conflicted with some commenters' view of school quality and the value they ascribed to school ratings. We identified 259 comments from the total sample (N= 3,339) coded as "Academic Achievement," reflecting comments about the quality of schools or education and school accreditation/test scores across both districts. In RPS, despite greater overall support for rezoning, findings underscored a tension between race, specifically anti-blackness, and school quality. One commenter stated:

> I believe that there is a fundamental yet uncomfortable issue of which many people are aware yet few, if any, are willing to discuss for fear of being branded as racist. For the past several decades, an increasing number of African-Americans have been having children out of wedlock prior to having any viable means of support. This combined with a culture that does not prioritize the value of education has led to a worrisome cycle of poverty and dependence upon state aid for support. This cultural shift from a 2 parent household to young unwed mothers sadly has much to do with the urban Black community's present woes. This problem will not be solved by redistricting schools.

Similar concerns emerged in HCPS regarding proposed options shifting boundaries in Brookland MD—the most racially and economically diverse. Commenters highlighted accreditation scores between current and proposed middle schools, for example, between Hungary Creek, which enrolled 42.6% students of color and 30.9% low-income students and Brookland, enrolling 77.3% students of color and 76.1% low-income students. Commenters noted there was "quite a difference

in scores which causes great concern for my children's education." Others raised questions like, "If this actually happens, what plans are in place to assure our students will receive the same caliber education, safety, and experiences?" Although such concerns are important, comments about Brookland's actual performance, according to state accountability data and accreditation ratings, did not align with some parents' negative perceptions of school quality (VDOE, 2021b). Therefore, assumptions about the quality of rezoned schools were largely based on student enrollment. These racialized constructions of school quality have consistently influenced school choice or residential decisions (e.g., Wells et al., 2018) and similarly bear out in public resistance to rezoning.

Commenters in HCPS were more likely to support rezoning when they perceived that the rezoned school was comparable in terms of school performance. For example, one commenter rejected proposed boundaries to Tucker High School because it was "nowhere near the same level academically to Glen Allen [the other high school]." The commenter further rationalized that "redistricting would be somewhat easier if we were being moved to a school that was ranked similar." Commenters preferred "lateral academic moves," as one commenter stated, although what characterized a lateral move was unclear. Tucker High School, located in the Three Chopt MD, was the center of several high school rezoning proposals in HCPS that would draw students from Brookland and Tuckahoe MDs. Several elementary and middle school rezoning options also included Tucker. At each school level (elementary, middle, and high), we found commenters largely rejected all proposed boundaries to Tucker, despite that it offered a newly renovated school building, additional curricular options, and capacity to enroll more students.

Yet, Tucker—a racially/ethnically diverse school that reflected the overall demographics of HCPS—enrolled majority students of color with 32.2% white, 24.5% Black, 23% Latinx, 15.3% Asian students and 51.4% low-income students and 13.2% ELLs. Rather than support proposed boundaries, commenters believed moving underperforming students into higher performing schools was a better solution. One written comment suggested to "leave us all where we are and bring some of the struggling students to our schools to alleviate the burden on Hermitage High School." Similarly, another comment stated, "Why water down the higher performing schools? Find ways to make the poorer performing schools better." Like Tucker, Hermitage also enrolled majority students of color with 43.1% Black, 16.4% Latinx, 4.7% Asian, and 30.1% white students. However, viewing students as a "burden" that "watered down" other (whiter) schools illustrates what Dumas and Anderson (2014) posit as the "problem of the problem." That is, written comments framed differences in student achievement as an individual problem, rather than a structural one—a critical concern in CPA. Furthermore, in the context of racially diverse schools like Tucker and Hermitage, findings reveal a passive value for diversity largely predicated on centering whiteness.

Conceptualization of Place

We defined conceptualization of place as expressions of community identity used to demarcate or signal place belonging in specific neighborhoods or communities. Some RPS commenters defined place rather narrowly as in "I live in the 400 block of Pollock St." or "We live within 5 blocks of William Fox," while HCPS commenters viewed it more expansively by considering where they "work, live, or play." Understanding this sense of place is important because commenters across both districts valued and defined their neighborhoods as "an integral part of the fabric of its community [that] forms a backdrop for lasting friendships, community involvement, and a sense of belonging," as one HCPS commenter noted. Conceptions of space and place are also racialized and contested (Lipsitz, 2011; Neely & Samura, 2011), shaping commenters' support or opposition to rezoning. We identified 1,089 total comments in HCPS and 292 comments in RPS expressing a collective value for conceptualization of place.

Although sense of place was frequently tied to shared resources within a neighborhood or school (discussed below), commenters often conceptualized their sense of place in less tangible ways by emphasizing "traditions" and "community values." This was most evident in HCPS comments involving middle and high schools. One HCPS commenter was "strongly against redistricting my neighborhood" because the rezoned school did not share similar values and therefore, redistricting "would be a drastic and difficult change to our lives." This aversion to change can be attributed to commenters' strong sense of allegiance or loyalty to particular middle or high schools and a deep connection to their community. Many believed that rezoning "would disrupt the continuity and character of our community," assuming that redistricting would uproot their entire lives.

Few commenters acknowledged that "integration and rezoning are about compromise," as one RPS comment stated. Rather, many believed rezoning infringed upon their sense of place and the values they ascribed to it. In response to this imposition, one HCPS commenter stated that "an army of Tuckahoe Elementary parents will stand shoulder to shoulder in boisterous opposition to Option 6 [to attend Tucker High School] should you proceed with it as a possible choice." Commenters' strong disregard further emphasizes the meaning-making dimension of place as a cultural construct (Butler & Sinclair, 2020). This loss of power and perceived imposition on their values resulted in some commenters threatening to exit the public system or leaving their neighborhoods.

Buying and Exiting School Zones

Opposition to rezoning was particularly strong in neighborhoods where commenters conceptualized their sense of belonging through an economic lens—a critical concern for the distribution of power and resources in CPA. Specifically, commenters opposed rezoning because it conflicted with values of individualism, personal choice, and the ability to exercise economic power to "buy-in" to certain neighborhoods and schools. By encroaching upon these values, commenters believed school officials, through rezoning, undermined their rights as taxpayers. An HCPS comment read, "we bought our house because all of the schools in our district were strong and accredited" and also echoed in RPS: "we purchased our house so we could live in the Mary Munford school zone." Although white, advantaged families consistently buy into mostly white neighborhoods "for the schools" (e.g., Holme, 2002; Turner et al., 2021), we emphasize these economic choices as justifications to oppose rezoning policies at the expense of racial equity.

Comments also linked the economic value of their homes to school and neighborhood quality, arguing that rezoning would "affect property values and taxes" and encourage white flight. These comments often conflicted with an espoused value for school diversity. In HCPS, for example, one commenter explained that:

> As a tax payer of Henrico county, I believe this [rezoning] will have a tremendous impact on our property value as anyone looking to move into this area, with a family, will reconsider when they see the difference in the school ratings between Hungary Creek and Brookland Middle Schools.

By suggesting that rezoning would impact property value, some commenters believed rezoning would drive out (white) families who bought into specific neighborhoods. Although we cannot speculate whether commenters would indeed act upon their threat to exit, these comments reveal the potential for a racially-motivated, unintended consequence of rezoning. One RPS commenter stated, "Like many people, we purchased our house partially because we wanted to be in the Holton district. We would seriously consider moving to the county or choosing to go private, if re-zoned out of Holton." Furthermore, in RPS, where many white parents opted in the public-school system

for elementary school, but enrolled their children in private schools for middle and high school, commenters felt that rezoning would "accelerate white flight" or encourage parents to enroll in private schools even earlier. This sentiment was expressed by several community members who cautioned school leaders that: "You will lose either Richmond city homeowners or public-school students if you rezone current students in Mary Munford...This could easily push us and MANY others out of the city and then you'll have even bigger issues." Commenters from Munford—the whitest (75.2%) and most affluent school (9.5% low-income) in RPS—utilized their home-buying power and financial resources to threaten exit by "moving out of the city."

However, some commenters took a more pragmatic approach, neither supporting or rejecting rezoning, but instead emphasizing that "Middle class parents are the resource here...They cannot be forced around the system, they have options, and they will leave, which will take away financial and other support from RPS." Although white families, with substantial government support, have historically exited schools, neighborhoods, or city centers when they become less white or when their economic interests are at stake (Hayter, 2017; Klarman, 1994), these comments demonstrate a contemporary iteration of white flight in education policy. Thus, the threat of exit illustrates that advantaged families are more supportive of the public system when it advantages them or when integration efforts align with their values.

The threat of exit was also evident in Henrico, but to a lesser degree. HCPS commenters suggested that some rezoning options would "drive resources away from HCPS" because "many high-income families will choose to send their children to private schools rather than send them to schools perceived as inferior." Another commenter mentioned "this change is going to have more of my neighbors choosing private school options versus continuing to support our public system." Rezoning opposition also encouraged within-district mobility as commenters suggested moving to another Henrico neighborhood where they perceived school attendance boundaries were more stable. This sense of stability was especially salient for some HCPS commenters who recently experienced rezoning. They argued that the current rezoning effort was "unacceptable" and "unfair to our community" because "we were JUST put through this major upheaval in the last HCPS Comprehensive Redistricting ten years ago." With the current rezoning plan, these commenters noted it would result in the "third high school in 10 years." In fact, prior redistricting efforts in both districts fueled frustration and opposition to rezoning as community members felt new rezoning initiatives would "hurt our community morale," as one commenter stated. To avoid being rezoned, commenters proposed alternative boundaries or rejected options altogether.

Boundary Maintenance

Lastly, we draw on the concept of boundary maintenance (Louie, 2016) to illustrate ways advantaged groups sought to retain their status by limiting access to crucial resources. Theoretically, it is related to the concept of opportunity hoarding (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018), but we draw on boundary maintenance given the study's literal and figurative emphasis on boundaries as a process of social stratification. Forms of boundary maintenance emerged across both districts to include concerns about walkability, safety, and disrupted networks or resources. Boundary maintenance was particularly evident in more restrictive or exclusive mid-to-upper class neighborhoods or those with fewer low-income families across both districts.

Walkability

Rezoning options that redrew lines and limited the convenience of walking to school was a major point of contention because commenters valued this convenience. In RPS, being able to walk or ride bikes to school was framed by one commenter as "an activity that is beneficial for not only

their [students'] physical fitness, but also promotes community." Another RPS community member stated, "...we value how our children can ride bikes/walk to Linwood Holton as it's within our neighborhood," but the new rezoned elementary school (Carver) "would be taking them out of the neighborhood." By suggesting that rezoning would "take them out of the neighborhood," these comments demonstrate the underlying discourse of walkability as a form of boundary maintenance linked to conceptualizations of neighborhood space. Walkability in RPS was also discussed in terms of financial cost to the district since "it [rezoning] would actually cost the city more to send my children [from Fox] to Cary." However, with a one-mile distance between Fox and Cary elementary schools, this commenter's concern about cost may be overinflated, leaving room for us to interrogate more salient concerns, such as the role of race. Although we identified multiple comments raising walkability as a concern (n= 144), it is important to clarify, as noted by these examples, that the two schools in question, subject to the proposed pairing strategy—Carver and Cary Elementary Schools—enrolled majority Black students at 92.4% and 83.6%, respectively.

Walkability concerns also emerged in HCPS with arguments framed around environmentalism, proximity to school buildings, maintaining community, and walking infrastructure (i.e., access to sidewalks). We identified a total of 455 of these comments. Henrico county is less dense than Richmond, therefore, comments on walkability reflected rezoning plans that mostly shifted students from Freeman to Tucker High Schools. To illustrate, one comment stated, "It is our local school. It is 1 mile away; a safe and walkable distance, with sidewalks to and from Freeman. Conversely, Tucker is TWICE as far away and there are NO sidewalks for safe pedestrian traffic. Tucker High School is not even in our magisterial district!" In this case, rezoning would impact walkability for students closer to Freeman, increase students' commute to Tucker, and have a negative environmental impact—all of which were factors that, according to this comment, outweighed the district's goals for socioeconomic diversity. Another commenter explained that this rezoning option would increase environmental costs, which is "inexcusable" because "my children and I walk to school every day...Henrico must care about the environment, and the children closest to Freeman HS must go to Freeman HS." Other commenters from Tuckahoe and Three Chopt MDs also valued "safe and walkable distance[s]," but, in the absence of clear goals addressing both racial and economic segregation, one commenter questioned that, "if proximity to schools is not the top priority for boundary lines, what is the top priority?"

Safety

The issue of walkability and proximity also emerged alongside community members' unease about safety. Several comments in Richmond expressed safety concerns related to traffic congestion and "the increased volume of students on buses" as well as concerns about bus accidents and pedestrian safety in their densely populated urban district. Several RPS comments opposed rezoning based on perceptions of community safety. One community member recalled an experience as a student at the local university, stating that "knives, syringes, condoms, and other paraphernalia" were on school playgrounds, and for this reason, "will be putting my child into a private school" should RPS adopt a rezoning option that would shift enrollment to a majority Black school. Similar comments reflected concerns about poor campus conditions, older facilities, or the school's surrounding areas. Many of these written comments parallel racialized conceptions of safety and perceived disorder within Black spaces or schools (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004).

Safety issues in HCPS primarily reflected concerns about high school students' commute. Commenters argued that rezoning would put students "at risk" or "in great danger" since some redrawn attendance boundaries would require travelling across major highways. Commenters also cited "an increased accident rate of 350%" or that some rezoning options would increase "traffic

volume [by] 4 to 10 times higher," however, we were unable to locate or verify these statistics based on public documents or data made available on districts' websites. Despite that school officials relied on expert knowledge to propose transportation routes for student safety (HCPS, 2019), commenters ultimately concluded that "the maps endorsed by the Redistricting Committee FAIL to limit student impacts and arbitrarily move school boundaries with little regard for established communities or existing feeder patterns." Overall, these expressed values for walkability and safety reveal forms of boundary maintenance not typically associated with the material and social resources emphasized in research on opportunity hoarding (Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2018).

Maintaining Networks and Resources

Preserving Social Ties and Relationships

Preserving networks and resources was another form of boundary maintenance used to justify opposition to rezoning as commenters argued that rezoning "causes disruption of existing social relationships." We identified 74 comments related to this theme (in the subsample). Community members expressed strong values for their social networks and believed that rezoning disrupted these ties. For example, an RPS commenter opposed rezoning to Blackwell Elementary School—a majority Black school (89.2%)—because "neighborhood friends all planned to send their kindergarten students to Westover Hills together," while another written comment stated that rezoning would "drastically reduce the parent involvement, which is a key factor that makes the school so good." Commenters in HCPS also emphasized adults' social ties, but underscored the impact of rezoning on students' relationships. Commenters in HCPS wanted to "keep kids together" because "they will lose friends and contacts." Others believed that rezoning would interfere with students' social and extracurricular opportunities in sports or band. Though we were unable to accurately determine which commenters were students, we identified a number of HCPS comments reflecting input from students—most of which opposed rezoning on account of keeping relationships intact. One of these comments read: "Please do not change me to Tucker High school. I would like to keep my friends from Tuckahoe," while another noted:

> I am a fifth grader assigned to Crestview and I believe that we should keep our zoning (Crestview, Tuckahoe, Freeman)...I would love to go to Freeman because I would like to keep my friends from Tuckahoe, I want to be able to not make a long drive, and I love the education I have heard from my neighbors about Freeman. Please do not change me to Tucker High School.

In RPS, maintaining relationships was key to rezoning opposition in one plan that proposed closing Bellevue, a majority Black (87.8%) elementary school in Richmond's east end. But, unlike other comments, rationales were not framed from an exclusionary lens. Commenters instead emphasized the assets within the school, noting it is "a wonderful school with an amazing family feel," where "children love their school and are extremely close with their teachers and classmates because of the small, intimate environment." Since there were no other rezoning options involving school closure in RPS, commenters raised concerns that their majority Black school with strong ties to the local community was yet again considered for closure as it was under the 2013 rezoning effort. Ultimately, these comments illustrate the complexities of rezoning, particularly when rezoning disrupts social ties in historically marginalized communities.

Overall, the desire to maintain relationships was coupled with a strong resistance to change, often supported by a sentiment that "go[ing] to school in their home neighborhoods and develop[ing] relationships with those who live around them seems like a more natural course of action." Such comments were mostly linked to tightly knit, white communities arguing that school

officials should "keep the feeder pattern [that was in place] for decades intact!" This resistance towards systemic change ultimately maintains residential and school segregation and reinforces racial and economic inequality.

Preserving Resources

Consistent with notions of opportunity hoarding, community members across both districts sought to limit access to crucial resources by opposing rezoning, instead of supporting rezoning as a redistributive mechanism to achieve greater equity. One RPS commenter opposed rezoning because it would "take away key PTA fundraising dollars," ultimately affecting parents' ability to maintain strong fundraising efforts in RPS schools. A similar HCPS comment from Tuckahoe MD facing rezoning to Three Chopt MD noted:

> Please use OUR money on infrastructure or to move around specialty centers.
> Nobody in the west end wants redistricting. Please stop making enemies out of us.
> NO REDISTRICTING. This is our money and tax dollars you are using to do
> something that nobody wants and is wreaking havoc on parents, children, families.

Additionally, commenters from several Henrico subdivisions believed they contributed to their school's culture through "invest[ing] time and money in support of Freeman," therefore, they opposed rezoning because it "is disruptive and negatively impacts our community." Many of these comments about PTA dollars were submitted verbatim from the same neighborhoods, suggesting the role of coalition influence.

Comments about resources were also tied to neighborhood resources as commenters argued that neighborhoods with shared amenities should not be rezoned. One commenter opposing the rezoning plan in Tuckahoe commented that "my children belong to the [local] Recreation Center…Godwin is our community." A similar RPS comment highlighted the intersection of school and neighborhood resources stating that:

> The reason that Munford and Fox are such amazing schools are because of the sense
> of community of the surround[ing] homes...and the deep parental involvement that
> allows the schools to offer high quality afterschool/during school extracurriculars.
> My daughter has benefited from these at Fox (Girls can Run)...

By defining the identity of the neighborhood and its available resources (e.g., community pool, recreation center, and school or community organizations), comments demonstrated that neighborhood and community identity are connected to its resources, but restricted by physical boundaries. In essence, commenters expressed greater value for exclusion and the material resources afforded to them within their schools, than a redistributive policy approach for collective equity.

Commenters invested in Tuckahoe and Three Chopt MDs in HCPS, along with the majority white elementary schools in RPS, were most vocal about protecting their investments and interests in the school or the school's feeder pattern. Here, boundary maintenance was bolstered by a fear that community members would "lose" due to rezoning. CPA offers an insightful lens to bring this critical concern—the creation of policy "winners" and "losers"—into view. One HCPS comment illustrated this concern: "as parents of children slated to go to Tuckahoe Middle School, we fought hard for the renovations of the school which my children would no longer be able to benefit from." Similarly, community members in both districts constantly emphasized their roles as "taxpayers" and "concerned parents" to argue that, as one commenter expressed, they were "owed some acknowledgement" about their input. As mentioned, commenters believed rezoning would "drive our home values down" or that it would lessen engagement from "some very involved families."

The insistence on preserving current attendance zones that largely excluded communities of color was intricately connected to a perceived sense of loss that influenced overall opposition to rezoning in both districts.

Discussion

Guided by CPA and CDA, this study illuminates policy tensions within school rezoning efforts. Our study contributes to a body of work exploring public participation in educational policymaking (Bertrand & Sampson, 2020; Collins, 2021; Tracy & Durfy, 2007) by leveraging a unique data set of 3,339 written public comments to offer a "real-time" window into the values and discourses regarding rezoning policy decisions. This study extends school rezoning research by focusing on the discourse surrounding it rather than the shape or segregative impact of the zones themselves (e.g., Saporito & Van Riper, 2016; Richards, 2014). By examining community members' positions on rezoning and interrogating what values shaped these positions, our findings shed light on race and class politics in school rezoning debates. We found that, despite an expressed desire or value for diversity and integration, as well as a collective understanding that "all schools are not created equal," comments overwhelmingly rejected districts' efforts to diversify schools, racially/ethnically and socioeconomically. These findings add to the body of work challenging assumptions that the public wants and is willing to act upon their desire for diverse schools (Alexander & Parcel, 2021; Evans, 2021)

The Limits of Diversity Discourse in Rezoning Policy

By drawing on CDA to identify discursive tactics in written public comments, findings show that resistance to the diversity priority in Richmond and Henrico was a contestation of diversity itself. The rezoning process revealed attitudes about diversity and the limits of diversity logic (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019), especially when it was predicated on and viewed through a "white racial frame" (Feagin, 2013). Namely, some Richmond residents asserted that diversity priorities were unnecessary because a school that was roughly 60% white (in a district that was 14% white) was already diverse. Our findings illustrate the limits of diversity discourse when diversity—as a policy target—is vague and leaves room for vastly different meanings and interpretations (Diem, Frankenberg, et al., 2014). This ambiguity further confirms Evans' (2021) conclusion that "seeking diversity in public schools should not be interpreted as an intended, if ineffective, anti-racist project" (p. 2), especially when considering the overwhelming resistance to rezoning options that included schools with more racially/ethnically diverse or low-income students. In this way, CPA allowed us to look beyond districts' policy priorities to interrogate public rhetoric valuing diversity as practiced reality (Young & Diem, 2017).

Comments also illustrated a myopic view of diversity divorced from the heavy concentration of white students enrolled in just three (out of 25) Richmond elementary schools. In Henrico, white families residing in rapidly diversifying areas of the district resisted transfer to more diverse schools because they saw themselves not as individuals but as part of a neighborhood contributing to diversity. This resistance in Henrico was partly shaped by how commenters understood diversity, also through a white-racial frame, independent of the assets and strengths within schools. For example, Tucker High boasted a new building with greater capacity and resources and represented a relatively even mix of racial/ethnic diversity among students. Similarly, contestations about diversity and conceptions of place emphasized inherent tensions within school desegregation policies as comments exposed "the contrast between discourse about diversity and discourse about rights" (Berrey, 2005, p. 163). Such rights were framed as "the right to live in certain neighborhoods to

access certain schools," which ultimately upheld values of power and individualism, rather than values of equity and the public good.

We partly attribute diversity contestations, as well as commenters espoused rather than actual value for racial and socioeconomic diversity, to vague rezoning priorities across districts. In Richmond, a priority around "increasing diversity of all kinds" did not offer a measurable way to assess whether rezoning options were meeting the priority and failed to focus public attention on white and affluent hyper-segregation. In HCPS, the district's decisions to highlight "reducing concentrations of poverty" as a rezoning criterion, and to largely focus on rezoning a small part of the district, served to uphold whiteness. These decisions excluded the most homogenous white and affluent schools in Henrico's west end and minimized racial segregation, erasing people of color from the district's east end. These competing values also regarded diversity as a problem to be fixed rather than as a driver for more inclusive school environments (Dumas & Anderson, 2014; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019).

Modern-Day Resistance to School Desegregation

Although there were some positive or neutral comments, these were to a lesser degree and comments were often supportive of whichever option that did "least harm" or the option that "appears to affect the least number of students overall." Few pro-rezoning comments explicitly stated support for disrupting racial and income segregation as a collective value for racial equity. Rather, oppositional comments sharpen our understanding of modern-day resistance to school desegregation efforts in increasingly diverse and segregated contexts. Aversive racism characterizes much of this resistance by explaining "how white evaluators with self-reported egalitarian beliefs nevertheless exhibit negative appraisals of minoritized populations through mechanisms of rationalization, avoidance, and shifting preferences" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, p. 315) to maintain systems of social stratification. As analytic tools, CDA and CPA bring commenters' resistive discourse to fore, enabling us to draw through lines to past resistance. These include white threat to exit districts should diversity priorities be adopted (Coleman et al., 1975; Kruse, 2005), white and/or relatively affluent attachment to economic power as a "race-neutral" method of racial exclusion (Freund, 2007; Harris, 1993; Turner et al., 2021; Wells, 2014) and racial boundary maintenance through a narrow definition of neighborhood (Delmont, 2016)—as well as newer discourse contesting the definition of school diversity.

The most extreme resistance to desegregative rezoning proposals in written public comments were threats to leave the school district or community. In some cases, particularly in Richmond, flight was explicitly tied to racialized perceptions of school quality. Commenters threatened flight from a majority white, affluent school if rezoning options proposed moving to a majority Black school. White, middle-to-upper class families sought to act on their perceptions of disorder, low achievement, and anti-blackness, seeing these schools through a white spatial imaginary or frame (Jenkins, 2021; Lipsitz, 2011). Despite student achievement data to the contrary in at least one Richmond school (VDOE, 2019)—racial isolation is perpetuated as white parents threaten to forgo enrolling their children in schools with majority students of color because they perceive schools as academically inferior (Hernández, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2014). Rather than redistributing their financial contributions, time, and social resources to a majority Black school within a *public* system under the pairing option, these Richmond families expressed intentions to uproot their children and use their buying power to opt into private schools or other school districts. In Henrico, racialized perceptions of schools were not always as explicit in comments about white flight in response to rezoning. Rather, Henrico residents narrowly focused on financial resources

(e.g., PTA dollars) being drained from their schools and funneled into the private sector which, commenters argued, would impact school ratings, tax rates, and home values.

The threat of white flight in the 21st century showcases the ongoing conflation of whiteness with status, property, and the right to exclude (Harris, 1993). It also implicates a contemporary legal and political context that makes it easier to flee and exclude in racially aversive ways (Picowar & Mayorga, 2015). What was at first openly discriminatory government action to support white flight through publicly funded vouchers to private white segregation academies (Rooks, 2018) has become increasingly "race neutral" boundary maintenance still backed by government support. Indeed, historical record indicates that land use policies, school district fragmentation, explosive growth in school choice, deeply unequal school funding schemes, punitive accountability systems tied to educational redlining and a racial wealth gap flowing from past racial discrimination in housing all contribute to persistent racial exclusion across metropolitan areas (Anderson, 2007; Fiel, 2015; Holzman, 2015; Rothstein, 2017).

The Role of Public Comments in Educational Policy

Methodologically, this study expands data collection opportunities for assessing public participation, not only at school board meetings or town halls (e.g., Bertrand & Sampson, 2020; Tracy & Durfy, 2007), but through larger data sets of written public comments. These data reveal the complexity of public participation in local educational decision making, given the different values used to justify public support for or resistance to policy change. Prior work indicates wide disparities between who attends public meetings or submits comments and who actively shapes public policy decisions (Collins, 2021). Yet it is unclear whether public comments, like the data collected in this study, are sufficient for creating democratic and balanced public engagement that limits dominant voices or powerful groups. Similarly, findings raise critical concerns about the role of written public comments to encourage and empower marginalized groups to share their voice, particularly in eastern Henrico where communities of color were largely erased from the rezoning policy process. Overall, our findings highlight the benefits and drawbacks of written public comments—as a practice of public and democratic engagement—and may explain why participation is highly variable, with some even remaining skeptical about its role in policy processes (Golden, 1998; West, 2004).

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

A number of areas for future research remain. We found preliminary evidence of neighborhood coalitions playing a gatekeeping role in public comment submission. Future work can and should explore how these coalitions frame and shape public discourse and perceptions. Relatedly, districts undergoing rezoning should commit to multiple forms of public engagement beyond the ability to submit written public comments. Our data suggested that opportunities to submit comments more than once without identifying information may contribute to unequal power and outsized influence on outcomes. To deal with these issues, a standardized public comment form should request basic information like name, community, school and race/ethnicity so that public officials can better understand who is participating (and how often) in the comment process. Tabulation of the data should be shared publicly and officials should state at the outset how comments will be used to shape policy outcomes. Additionally, this study raises important questions about desirable levels of public participation and what methods should be used to achieve "democratic innovations to the typical public meeting space" (Collins, 2021, p. 792).

Moreover, we did not address the inner workings of schools—particularly as they relate to segregation between classrooms and access to school resources—but rather addressed the

underlying arguments for and against rezoning. Future research should explore the relationship between this phenomenon—that is, when schools adopt and implement rezoning for desegregative purposes, what within-school dynamics follow in the short-and long-term?

Our findings highlight ways school leaders must challenge narratives around diversity and its relation to school quality, specifically, *perceived* school quality versus *actual* school quality. Many commenters perceived school quality on the basis of school (and to some extent neighborhood) racial composition, independent of other valid and reliable indicators. Findings suggest that school leaders introspect about, challenge, and commit to interrogating these forms of discursive resistance in education policy.

Given the lack of clarity around diversity goals, school officials must adopt clear rezoning priorities with specific and measurable integration criteria. This enables communities to accurately assess various rezoning options and the value districts assign to these criteria. If reducing racial and/or economic segregation is a goal, rezoning needs to incorporate all communities within the district that contribute significantly to segregation. School leaders can also better discuss existing school-level indicators like enrollment, attendance, climate and achievement in the rezoning process. Simultaneously, they should avoid peddling diversity as a commodity (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019, especially when affirming the educational assets in schools serving students of color.

A longer-term but essential focus is community education around the dynamics of school and residential segregation. Building a shared understanding of racism, classism, and discrimination can help strengthen political will for addressing systemic changes, which should include inclusionary housing policies in tandem with integrative school rezoning, as well as targeted housing assistance to historically marginalized families to address past and ongoing housing discrimination. Education and real estate officials additionally should work against the "buying homes, buying schools" (Holme, 2002) mentality that drove some of the opposition in Richmond and Henrico public comments, in part, by transparently communicating that school attendance boundaries are subject to regular modification. More broadly, centering attention on the public's interest in a strong, inclusive and equitable system of public education remains imperative.

Acknowledgements

References

Abel, R. M. (2012). Drawing the lines: Pushing past Arlington heights and parents involved in school attendance zone cases. *Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal, 2012*(2), 369-412. https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/elj/vol2012/iss2/6

Alexander, A. J., & Parcel, T. L. (2021). Location, location, location? School district, length of residence and attitudes toward diversity and neighborhood schools in the Upper South. *American Behavioral Scientist*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642211033292

Anderson, J. D. (2007). Race-conscious educational policies versus a "color-blind constitution": A historical perspective. *Educational Researcher, 36*(5), 249-257. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07306534

Apple, M. W. (2019). On doing critical policy analysis. *Educational Policy*, 33(1), 276-287.https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818807307

Ballinger, T., & Crocker, J. (2020). Understanding whites' perceptions of multicultural policies: A (non)zero-sum framework? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000315

Bartels, B., & Donato, R. (2009). Unmasking the school re-zoning process: Race and class in a Northern Colorado community. *Latino Studies, 7*(2), 222-249. https://doi.org/10.1057/lst.2009.9

Bertrand, M., & Sampson, C. (2020). Challenging systemic racism in school board meetings through intertextual co-optation. *Critical Studies in Education*, *00*(00), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1765823

Boyd, W. (1976). The public, the professionals, and educational policy making: Who governs? *Teachers College Record*, *77*(4), 539-578. https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=1256

Butler, A. B., & Sinclair, K. A. (2020). Place matters: A critical review of place inquiry and spatial methods in education research. *Review of Research in Education, 44*(1), 64-96. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X20903303

Coleman, J. S., Kelly, S. D., & Moore, J. A. (1975). *Trends in school segregation, 1968-73*. The Urban Institute.

Collins, J. E. (2021). Does the meeting style matter? The effects of exposure to participatory and deliberative school board meetings. *American Political Science Review*, *115*(3), 790-804. doi:10.1017/S0003055421000320

Delmont, M. F. (2016). *Why busing failed: Race, media, and the national resistance to school desegregation*. University of California Press.

Diem, S., & Sampson, C. (2020). Goals rhetoric and (in)equity: The rationales behind decentralizing a large, diverse school district. *Urban Education, 00*(0), 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085920908915

Diem, S., Frankenberg, E., Cleary, C., & Ali, N. (2014). The politics of maintaining diversity policies in demographically changing urban–suburban school districts. *American Journal of Education* 120 (3): 351–389.10.1086/675532

Diem, S., Young, M. D., Welton, A. D., Mansfield, K. C., & Lee, P. L. (2014). The intellectual landscape of critical policy analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *27*(9), 1068-1090.

Dorner, L. M. (2011). Contested communities in a debate over dual-language education: The import of "public" values on public policies. *Education Policy*, *25*(4), 577-613. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904810368275

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science, 11*(4), 315-319. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00262

Dumas, M. J. (2011). A cultural political economy of school desegregation in Seattle. *Teachers College Record*, 113(4), 703-734. https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=15970

Dumas, M. J., & Anderson, G. (2014). Qualitative research as policy knowledge: Framing policy problems and transforming education from the ground up. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 22*(11). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22n11.2014.

Evans, S. A. (2021). "I wanted diversity, but not so much": Middle-class white parents, school choice, and the persistence of anti-Black stereotypes. *Urban Education*. DOI: 10.1177/00420859211031952

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2011). Semiotic aspects of social transformation and learning. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education* (pp. 147-155). Routledge.

Feagin, J. (2013). *The white racial frame* (2nd ed). *New York, NY:* Routledge.

Fischer, F. (2003). *Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices.* Oxford University Press.

Fiel, J. (2015). Closing ranks: Closure, status competition, and school segregation. *American Journal of Sociology, 121*(1), 126-170. https://doi.org/10.1086/682027

Fitzgerald, J. (2011). Public opinion on bilingual education in Colorado and Massachusetts. *The Social Science Journal, 48*(2), 371-396. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2010.07.001

Frankenberg, E., & Diem, S. (2013). School board leadership and policymaking in changing political environments. *Urban Review, 45*(2), 117-142. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0211-8

Frankenberg, E., Anderson, J., & Taylor, K. (2017). *Voluntary integration in U.S. school districts, 2000-2015.* Center for Education and Civil Rights. https://cecr.ed.psu.edu/sites/default/files/Voluntary_Integration_Research_Brief_0.pdf

Freelon, R. (2018). Transformational resistance and parent leadership: Black parents in a school district decision-making process. *Urban Education, 00(0),* https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918801886

Freund, D. M. P. (2007). *Colored property: State policy and white racial politics in suburban America.* The University of Chicago Press.

Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Golden, M. M. (1998). Interest groups in the rule-making process: Who participates? Whose voices get heard? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 8*(2), 245-270. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024380

Hampton, G. (2009). Narrative policy analysis and the integration of public involvement in decision making. *Policy Sciences, 42*(1), 227-242. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-009-9087-1

Harris, C. L. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review, 106*(8), 1707-1791. https://doi.org/10.2307/1341787

Haynes-Maslow, L., Andress, L., Pitts, S. J., Osborne, I., Baquero, B., Bailey-Davis, L., Byker-Shanks, C., Houghtaling, B., Kolodinskey, J., Lo, B. K., Morgan, E. H., Piltch, E., Prewitt, E., Seguin, R. A., & Ammerman, A. S. (2018). Arguments used in public comments to support or oppose the US department of agriculture's minimum stocking requirements: A content analysis. *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 118*(9), 1664-1672. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2017.12.005

Henig, J. R. (2011). The contemporary context of public engagement: The new political grid. In M. Orr & J. Rogers (Eds.), *Public engagement for public education: Joining forces to revitalize democracy and equalize schools* (pp. 52–85). Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804776387-005

Henrico County Public Schools. (2019, August). *HCPS Policy and Regulations for Redistricting Studies.* https://henricoschools.us/wp-content/uploads/HCPSPolicyandRegulationsforRedistrictingStudies.pdf

Hernández, M. (2019). White middle-class families and sociocultural diversity in schools: A literature review. *The Urban Review, 51*(1), 270-300. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0477-6

Holme, J. J. (2002). Buying homes, buying schools: School choice and the social construction of school quality. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(2), 177-206. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.2.u6272x676823788r

Holme, J. J., Frankenberg, E., Diem, S., & Welton, A. D. (2013). School choice in suburbia: The impact of choice policies on the potential for suburban integration. *Journal of School Choice, 7*(2), 113-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/15582159.2013.789293

Holzman, M. (2012). *A rotting apple: Education redlining in New York City.* Schott Foundation

for Public Education.

Horsford, S. D. (2019). School integration in the new Jim Crow: Opportunity or oxymoron? *Educational Policy*, 33(1), 257-275. DOI: 10.1177/0895904818810526

Hughey, M. W., & Daniels, J. (2013). Racist comments at online news sites: A methodological dilemma for discourse analysis. *Media, Culture, & Society, 35*(3), 332-347. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712472089

Jenkins, D. A. (2021). Unspoken grammar of place: Anti-Blackness as a spatial imaginary in education. *Journal of School Leadership*, *31*(1-2), 107-126. DOI: 10.1177/1052684621992768

Kingdon, J.W. (2003). *Agendas, alternatives, and public policies* (2nd ed.). Longman.

Klarman, M. J. (1994). Brown, racial change, and the civil rights movement. *Virginia Law Review, 80*(1), 7-150. https://doi.org/10.2307/1073592

Kruse, K. (2005). The politics of race and public space: Desegregation, privatization, and the tax revolt in Atlanta. *Journal of Urban History, 31*(5), 610-633. https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144205275732

Ladson-Billings, G. (2004). Landing on the wrong note: The price we paid for *Brown. Educational Researcher, 33*(73), 3-13. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3700092

Lareau, A. (2014). Schools, housing, and the reproduction of inequality. In A. Lareau & K. Goyette (Eds.). *Choosing homes, choosing schools* (pp. 169-206). Russell Sage Foundation.

Lazarus, W. (2010). School boundaries: Finding solutions while gaining community support. *School Business Affairs*, *76*(10), 26-28. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ914684.pdf

Lester, J. N., Lochmiller, C. R., & Gabriel, R. (2016). Locating and applying critical discourse analysis within educational policy: An introduction. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24*(102), 1-15. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.24.2768

Lewis, A. E., & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press

Lipsitz, G. (2011). *How racism takes place*. Temple University Press.

Livermore, M. A., Eidelman, V., & Grom, B. (2018). Computationally assisted regulatory participation. *Notre Dame Law Review*, *93*(3), 977-1034. https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol93/iss3/2

Louie, V. (2016). *Identifying responses to inequality: The potential of qualitative and mixed-methods research*. William T. Grant Foundation. http://wtgrantfoundation.org/library/uploads/2016/06/The-Value-of-Qualitative-and-Mixed-Methods-Research.pdf

Martin, L. L., & Varner, K. J. (2017). Race, residential segregation, and the death of democracy: Education and myth of postracialism. *Democracy and Education, 25*(1), 1-10. https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol25/iss1/4

Mattingly, J. (2019). At first public hearing on rezoning, parents urge Richmond School Board to pair schools. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Retrieved May 19, 2021, from https://richmond.com/news/local/plus/at-first-public-hearing-on-rezoning-parents-urge-richmond-school-board-to-pair-schools/article_b1752e3a-81a2-5ce9-a495-520d79fc36a8.html

Mayorga-Gallo, S. (2019). The white-centering logic of diversity ideology. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *63*(13), 1789-1809. Article reuse guidelines: sagepub.com/journals-permissions DOI: 10.1177/0002764219842619.

McDermott, K. A., Frankenberg, E, & Diem, S. (2015). The "post-racial" politics of race: Changing student assignment policy in three school districts. *Educational Policy, 29*(3), 504-554. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904813510775

Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Milner, H. R., Delale-O'Connor, L. A., Murray, I. E., & Farinde-Wu, A. A. (2016). Reflections on *Brown* to understand *Milliken v. Bradley*: What if we are focusing on the wrong policy questions? *Teachers College Record, 118*(6), 1-32. https://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=18248

Neely, B., & Samura, M. (2011). Social geographies of race: Connecting race and space. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*(11), 1933-1952. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.559262.

Orfield, M., & Luce, T. F. (2010). *Region: Planning the future of the twin cities.* University of Minnesota Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.cttttqj5

Pang, B. & Lee, L. (2008). Opinion mining and sentiment analysis. *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval, 2*(1-2), 1-135. https://doi.org/10.1561/1500000011

Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, 551 U.S. 701 (2007). https://www.oyez.org/cases/2006/05-908

Picowar, B., & Mayorga, E. (2015). (Eds.) *What's race got to do with it? How current school reform policy maintains racial and economic inequality* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang.

Posey-Maddox, L. (2014). *When middle-class parents choose urban schools: Class, race, and the challenge of equity in public education.* The University of Chicago Press.

Richards, M. P. (2014). The gerrymandering of school attendance zones and the segregation of public schools: A geospatial analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 51*(6), 1119-1157. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214553652

Richmond Public Schools (2020). *Rezoning goals and objectives.* https://www.rvaschools.net/Page/7259

Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & Joseph, G. O. (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(3), 365-416. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543075003365

Rooks, N. (2018). *Cutting school: The privatization, segregation, and the end of public education.* The New Press.

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The color of law: A forgotten history of how our government segregated America.* Liveright.

Sampson, C. & Diem, S. (2020). Democratic (dis)engagement in school district decentralization: A critical analysis of actors and coalitions. *Leadership and Policy in Schools.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1836230

Sampson, R. J. & Raudenbush, S. (2004). Seeing disorder: Neighborhood stigma and the social construction of 'broken windows.'" *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *67*(4), 319–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/019027250406700401

Saporito, S., & Van Riper, D. (2016). Do irregularly shaped school attendance zones contribute to racial segregation or integration? *Social Currents, 3*(1), 64-83. https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496515604637

Sattin-Bajaj, C., & Roda, A. (2020). Opportunity hoarding in school choice contexts: The role of policy design in promoting middle-class parent's exclusionary behaviors. *Educational Policy, 34*(7), 992-1035. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818802106

Shapiro, R. Y. (2011). Public opinion and American democracy. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 75*(5), 982-1017. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfr053

Siegel-Hawley, G. (2013). Educational gerrymandering? Race and attendance boundaries in a demographically changing suburb. *Harvard Educational Review, 83*(4). https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.83.4.k385375245677131

Siegel-Hawley, G., Bridges, K., & Shields, T. J. (2017). Solidifying segregation or promoting diversity? School closure and rezoning in an urban district. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *53*(1), 107-141. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16659346

Tannenbaum, D. (2013). *School Choice, redistricting, and the distributional consequences of student assignment reform.* [Working paper]. Department of Economics, The University of Chicago.

Tracy, K., & Durfy, M. (2007). Speaking out in public: Citizen participation in contentious school board meetings. *Discourse & Communication 1*(2), 223–49. https://doi.org.10.1177/1750481307076008.

Turner, M. A., Chingos, M. M., & Spievack, N. (2021). *White people's choices perpetuate school and neighborhood segregation: What would it take to change them?* The Urban Institute.

Virginia Department of Education. (2019). *Virginia department of education school quality profiles: John B. Cary Elementary.* https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/schools/john-b-cary-elementary-2

Virginia Department of Education. (2021a). *Fall Membership Build-A-Table.* [Data Set]. https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/apex/f?p=180:1:::::p_session_id,p_application_name:-6539595367835159028,fallmembership

Virginia Department of Education. (2021b). *Virginia department of education school quality profiles: Brookland middle.* https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/schools/brookland-middle

Wells, A. S. (2014). *Seeing past the "colorblind" myth of education policy: Addressing racial and ethnic inequality and supporting culturally diverse schools.* National Education Policy Center. https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/seeing-past-the-colorblind-myth

Wells, A. S., Fox, L., Cordova-Cobo, D., & Ready, D. (2018). Addressing the patterns of resegregation in urban and suburban contexts: How to stabilize integrated schools and communities amid metro migrations. In C. Herbert, J. Spader, J. Molinsky & S. Rieger (Eds.), *A shared future: Fostering communities of inclusion in an era of inequality* (pp. 398-421). Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

Welsh, R. O., Williams, S., Little, S., & Graham, J. (2019). Examining the narrative: An analysis of the racial discourse embedded in state takeover. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *52*(4), 502-526. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1691958

Young, M.D., & Diem, S. (2017). Introduction: Critical approaches to education policy analysis. In M. Young & S. Diem (Eds.), *Critical Approaches to Education Policy Analysis* (p. 1-13). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-39643-9_1

Appendix A

Figure 1

Sample Screenshot of Submitted Public Comments for HCPS

District	District Code	School affiliation	Subdivision Affiliation	Please provide your questions or feedback related to the process.	Timestamp
Brookland	3	Trivett	Stonewall Manor	I have a child in 3rd grade whose home school is Trivett. I am strongly against have our children go to a school that's further	2020/02/13
Brookland	3	Trevvett Elementary	Stonewall Manor	I oppose on redistricting from Trevvett Elementary school to Holladay Elementary school	2020/01/27
Brookland	3	Trevvett Elementary	Sanctuary Dr	Please reconsider the redistributing of the students on Sanctuary Dr and Stonewall Manor from Trevvett to Holliday	2020/01/16
Brookland	3	Trevvett elementary	Stonewall manor	Redistricting is from a good rated school to a low rated is not a good move. We moved to this area because of the school	2020/01/20
Brookland	3	Trevvett	Stonewall	I am not happy to be Redistricting to a low graded school system. I am a single mom who worked her ass off to be able to	2020/01/20
Brookland	3	Trevvett	Stonewall Manor	I oppose the redistricting of Stonewall Manor residents from Trevvett Elementary to Holladay Elementary.	2020/01/26
Brookland	3	Trevvett	Stone Ridge (with Stone Wall)	PLEASE do not redistrict. I love Trevvet, my child loves his school. It would be a whole adjustment again and again to try to	2020/01/20
Brookland	3	Trevvett	Stonewall Manor	The Redistricting of our neighborhood will negatively impact all of the elementary aged children such as my rising	2020/01/20
Brookland	3	Redistricting from HCMS & GAHS	Magnolia RIdge	Hello- I am curious as to how the subdivisions are picked for redistricting? There are areas closer to BMS that need to be	2019/10/25
Brookland	3	RC Longan, Hungary Creek, Glen Allen	Brittany	I want to keep our zones schools as is with Longan, Hungary Creek, and Glen Allen HS. I do not like Options 1, 3, and 4 with	2019/10/15
Brookland	3	RC Longan, Hungary Creek MS, Glen	Brittany	I am writing to you today as a concerned citizen regarding the HCPS redistricting plans. I am requesting that you ensure the	2019/11/12
Brookland	3	RC Longan	Hill Trace	A and C	2020/01/06
Brookland	3	RC Longan	Dove Hollow	I am opposed to redistricting the Dove Hollow subdivision back to Brookland and Hermitage. One of my daughters is special	2019/10/21
Brookland	3	RC Longan	Ironwood at CrossRidge	Option 5 and/or 6 is much more suitable for our children and this community	2019/10/23
Brookland	3	RC Longan	Ironwood@CrossRidge	Option A is consistent with districting lines, which typically follow major roadways as boundaries.Hungary Road & Staples	2019/11/17
Brookland	3	RC Logan	Dove Hollow	Option A & C: Echo Lake, Hungary Creek, Glen Allen	2020/01/06
Brookland	3	OPTION D going to GAHS	Mountain Glen Subdivision	To Whom It May Concern:	2020/02/18
Brookland	3	Option A: Echo Lake, Hungary Creek,	Staples trace rd	We support option A and C	2020/01/05
Brookland	3	Moody Middle School and Hermitage	Lakeside	Unfortunately, due to work, I was unable to attend the redistricting meeting tonight. I live near Bryan Park, and my kids are	2020/01/09
Brookland	3	Moody Middle	Lakeside	I have been keeping an eye on the draft redistricting maps and attended the initial meeting on redistricting. We were told	2019/10/22
Brookland	3	Moody	Brookland school district	Finally!! Option 6 finally sees some well needed shifting! Love seeing commonsense effort and an attempt to address past	2019/10/22
Brookland	3	Maude Trevvett Elementary School	Stone Ridge Townhomes	Opposed against the Redistricting of Stonewall manor and surrounding neighborhoods from Maude Trevvett to Holladay!	2020/01/20
Brookland	3	Maude Trevvett Elementary	Stonewall Manor	Dear Sir or Mam,	2020/01/24
Brookland	3	Maude Trevvett Elementary	Woodman Terrace	I do not want my daughter to be moved to another school when my family has moved twice to stay in district to be at	2020/02/14
Brookland	3	Maude Trevvett elementary	Glen allen	I'm not happy with the idea or redistricting of Maude Trevvett Elementary. It will make it more of an inconvenience for my	2020/02/14

Figure 2

Sample Screenshot of Submitted Public Comments for RPS

District ▼	School	Feedback
1,5	Albert Hill, Binford	Community and the neighborhood are what help bring up schools and the pairing for the Fox/Cary breaks apart a supportive, walkable neighborhood between 2
7,1	Bellevue and Albert Hill	For the east end, I feel option two is best at this point. East end children are often shuffled around and scattered on a whim. Option two seems to give the most
7,1	Bellevue and Albert Hill	The process feels very rushed and without proper study and research. Shuffling students will not provide the desired results. Increased funding, better student
8,4	Broad Rock and Lucille Brown	Any overcrowding should be alleviated to improve learning and staffing outcomes. Any shift should be tracked and reevaluated ongoing as needed to reflect
5,1	Cary, Binford, TJ	I am excited to see the bolder steps discussed during tonight's rezoning meeting (7/30) regarding Cary, Munford, Fox, Carver. I think we should be seriously
5,1	Cary, Binford, TJ	I support option 2, I appreciate the diversity it would bring to the schools which are 1950s style segregated. This is what we moved into RPS for (after living in
5,1	Cary, Binford, TJ	I think there needs to be more kids pulled from Southside, East, and North into the central district (Fox, Munford, Cary) schools...they have hardly touched
5,1	Cary, Binford, TJ	We need pair Munford and Cary
5,7	Cary, Fairfield, Woodville	*The Fox-Cary sharing option in Option 2 is what's best for all of the students in that area. Both schools are good schools but lack diversity in race and
5,7	Cary, Fairfield, Woodville	Overall, I'm so happy to see the school system moving in directions that will level the playing field for all students, and trade in modern day segregation for
5,2	Cary, Fox	As many others have stated, this rezoning process is being rushed and doesn't seem well planned. There are a lot of people being affected and rash decisions
5,2	Cary, Fox	Research shows that more transitional building changes equals less student/teacher/parent connections and increase drop outs. So a student would start at
2,5	Fox, Binford	I am against pairing of elementary schools. The negative impacts of transitions, safety of students during transportation, and the financial impacts on RPS over
2,5	Fox, Binford	I appreciate the work being done by the resining committee, but I am quickly losing faith in RPS. As a working mom, I feel overwhelmed and out of the loop.
2,5	Fox, Binford	I would love to see efforts to build up all the schools. Create some programs within the elementary schools to motivate parents to choose those programs and
2,5	Fox, Binford	Trying not to lose faith in RPS.
2,5,1	Fox, Binford, Thomas Jefferson	Stay with your mission to increase diversity and spread equity across all of the schools.
2,5,1	Fox, Binford, TJ	I would like children to be able to attend schools that are walkable if possible. I would also, like the committee to take their time when making this big decision.
2,5,1	Fox, Binford, TJ	The new re-zoning seems like it's gotten out of hand. schools should be as walkable as possible and keep neighborhoods/communities together. I don't want to
2,5,1	Fox, Binford, TJ	This is positively ridiculous. I purchased a home in a neighborhood due to proximity to an elementary school. I will not shuffle and uproot my child every few
2,1,5,7	Fox, Carver, Hill, Binford, Maggie Wa	Provide better maps to demonstrate the proposed changes. Provide clearer options. Align forms with the questionnaire. Use concise clear language. Provide
2,1	Fox, Hill, TJ	Overall, I think the committee should look at the walkability factor. This could generally cut costs in the bus routes, and increase the community/neighborhood

Appendix B

Table 1A

Parent Codes Used for Analysis

Code	Description
Academic Achievement	General comments about the quality of schools or education; school accreditation/test scores
Conception of Place	Expressions of how individuals define place and community; community identity; specific demarcations of street names or numbers to signal neighborhood or community
Diversity	Expressions of school rezoning serving emphasis on serving a wide range of individuals, especially racially and economically vulnerable populations; General expressions of equity where race or SES is not specifically defined
Emotionality	Expressions that reflect strong emotional response to school rezoning; Consider caps being a signal for emotionality; words that suggest strong emotion
Enrollment	Concerns about under or over enrollment; Building utilization and space; general enrollment concerns (i.e., " I don't want to send my child to that school)
Facilities	Comments about condition of the building or the need for a new building
Power	Expresses/describes actions related to changes to individual or collective political, economic (financial resources), power; parental choice; residential consumption choices
Prior Redistricting	Experiences of prior redistricting in RPS/HCPS or other context (e.g. other states, school districts)
Process	Comments that address the process of rezoning (i.e., public engagement, role of leaders, options presented, etc.)
Proximity	Proximity to school site, transportation, walkability, ability to ride to school as framing for comment
Relationship	Comments that address school rezoning affecting relationships or social networks
Resources	Comments that reflect material or financial resources within schools (i.e., parks, playgrounds, extracurricular activities; labs; language programs, school budgets, etc.); social resources (i.e., PTA); Learning tools within schools; extracurricular activities

Code	Description
Safety	Perceptions that school rezoning will impact students' safety (e.g., safety within school or by traveling)
School Culture	Expressions that relate to intangible or immaterial aspects of school (i.e., school pride, legacy school; allegiance to particular school)
Other	For quotes that do not fit the existing major codes, we will code as "other" and include a memo

About the Authors

Andrene J. Castro
Virginia Commonwealth University
Castroa2@vcu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7579-5627
Andrene J. Castro is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and faculty scholar at the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry, and Innovation at Virginia Commonwealth University. Castro's research explores two educational policy areas: 1) policies and leadership practices shaping teacher recruitment and retention with a particular focus on teachers of color; and 2) educational policies impacting school neighborhood-communities.

Mitchell Parry
Virginia Commonwealth University
parrym@vcu.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5193-6181
Mitchell Parry is a PhD candidate in educational leadership, policy and justice at Virginia Commonwealth University. His dissertation will explore the experiences of sexual minority students with Virginia's public-school sexuality education program, with a goal of amplifying their voices and needs.

Genevieve Siegel-Hawley
Virginia Commonwealth University
gsiegelhawle@vcu.edu
Genevieve Siegel-Hawley is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University. She studies the dynamics of school segregation and integration in metropolitan contexts.

About the Editors

Sarah Diem
University of Missouri
mailto:diems@missouri.edu
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0798-5220
Sarah Diem is a professor of educational policy and leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri. Her research focuses on the sociopolitical and geographic contexts of education, paying particular attention to how politics, leadership, and implementation of educational policies affect outcomes related to equity, opportunity, and racial diversity within public schools.

Jeffrey S. Brooks
Curtin University
jeffrey.brooks@curtin.edu.au
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5742-3958
Jeffrey S. Brooks is a professor of education and head of school of the School of Education at Curtin University. His research focuses on how leadership influences (and is influenced by) dynamics related to social justice, racism, and globalisation.

SPECIAL ISSUE
Critical Policy Analysis in Education:
Exploring and Interrogating (In)Equity Across Contexts

education policy analysis archives