

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

IN PURSUIT OF EQUITY: THE POLITICS
OF DESEGREGATION IN HOWARD
COUNTY, MARYLAND

Kayla M. Bill, Doctor of Philosophy, 2023

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School desegregation policies aim to redistribute educational resources and opportunities more equitably, but they have not always done so. Evidence indicates that political factors, including resistance from White parents and legal constraints, have undermined desegregation policies' potential to fulfill their aims. Yet, a few studies suggest that windows of opportunity to desegregate schools exist. Even so, these studies often focus on how a subset of political factors shape desegregation efforts, and some political factors remain understudied. Furthermore, school desegregation research tends to focus on *either* the political dynamics of advancing these policies *or* the effects these policies have on segregation. Thus, the extent to which political factors affect desegregation policies' potential to reduce segregation and, eventually, to advance educational equity remains an open question.

My dissertation addresses these gaps in the literature by using a race-conscious political framework and a qualitative-dominant, convergent parallel mixed methods design to explore the

politics and outcomes of the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) recent effort to desegregate by redistricting, or redrawing school attendance boundary lines. Howard County is an ideal setting to study desegregation because it possesses several favorable conditions for desegregating schools, including racial/ethnic diversity, espoused commitments to educational equity, and a history of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic integration. These favorable conditions allow me to “test” whether desegregation is a feasible policy goal for school districts and to provide policymakers with insights about how to advance desegregation policies in ways that maximize their potential to reduce segregation and promote educational equity.

I find that school overcrowding, growing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, and resource inequities led the HCPSS Superintendent and the Howard County Board of Education to initiate redistricting. The superintendent proposed a redistricting plan that had the potential to reduce segregation in HCPSS. Yet, various political factors—including resistance from wealthy White and Asian parents and limitations from HCPSS's formal attendance boundary adjustment policy—led the board to enact a redistricting plan that had relatively less potential to reduce segregation and would have increased it at some school levels. Upon implementation, the enacted redistricting plan appeared to reduce segregation in HCPSS, but those reductions likely resulted from enrollment changes in the district. Ultimately, findings suggest that, under favorable political conditions, desegregation policies *do* have the potential to reduce segregation. However, realizing these policies' potential will require districts to either a) explicitly prioritize desegregation, rather than allowing policymakers to attempt to balance desegregation with other, often competing policy goals, or b) align desegregation with other policy goals, rather than pitting it against them.

IN PURSUIT OF EQUITY: THE POLITICS OF DESEGREGATION IN HOWARD
COUNTY, MARYLAND

by

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Dedication

To Betty Malen,

No amount of “Malen” citations in my reference list could capture how much you and your scholarship helped me conceptualize and write this dissertation. Thank you for challenging me as much as you supported me, for always knowing what to say, and for believing in me. We miss you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation between schools and between districts themselves is a persistent policy problem in the United States (Frankenberg et al., 2019; Fuller et al., 2022; Owens, 2020; Owens et al., 2016; Reardon & Owens, 2014; Richards et al., 2020). In 2016, students of most racial/ethnic groups attended schools where their group was overrepresented relative to the public school student population overall. For example, although White students only accounted for approximately 48% of the student population that year, they attended schools that were 69% White. Similarly, while Black students only accounted for 15% of enrollment, they attended schools that were 47% Black (Frankenberg et al., 2019). Black and Latinx students were concentrated in some districts, while White and Asian students were concentrated in others (Fuller et al., 2022; Owens, 2020; Richards et al., 2020).

Socioeconomic segregation between schools and districts has grown even more dramatically than racial/ethnic segregation in recent years (Owens et al., 2016; Reardon & Owens, 2014). For instance, school segregation in large districts between students who are eligible for free meals and students who are not eligible grew by more than 40% from 1991 to 2012, and income segregation between districts increased by more than 15% from 1990 to 2010 (Owens et al., 2016). Moreover, Black and Latinx students tend to be concentrated in low-income schools and districts (Frankenberg et al., 2019; Fuller et al., 2022; Fahle et al., 2020), which further compounds educational inequities because exposure to poverty contributes to racial/ethnic disparities in academic outcomes (Reardon et al., 2022; Reardon et al., 2019). These trends toward increasingly racially/ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous schools and districts are particularly concerning given that segregation is associated with disparities in educational outcomes and resources (Baker et al., 2020; Carter & Welner, 2013; Matheny et al.,

2023; Mickelson et al., 2021; Reardon et al., 2019; Reardon et al., 2022) and that it limits students' interactions with diverse peers, which may have negative consequences for social cohesion in a pluralist, democratic society (Braddock II & Gonzalez, 2010; Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012; Mikulyuk & Braddock II, 2018).

School desegregation policies are one potential remedy for these educational inequities. Although these policies come in various forms—from choice-based student assignment plans to busing students from schools in their neighborhood to schools in other parts of a district—they generally involve redistributing students across schools to increase racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. The theory of action underlying desegregation policies is that diversifying schools will ensure that students of all races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses have equal access to educational opportunities and resources. Indeed, some evidence suggests that desegregation has improved educational and occupational outcomes for students of Color (Anstreicher et al., 2022; Ashenfelter et al., 2006; Guryan, 2004; Johnson, 2019). For example, a recent analysis found that court-ordered desegregation, particularly in the South, improved Black students' future labor market outcomes (Anstreicher et al., 2022). Yet, other evidence suggests that desegregation has come at a high cost for families of Color and has *compounded* educational inequities (Dougherty, 2020; Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Serbulo, 2019; Wells et al., 2004). For instance, Black students have been bused to schools outside their neighborhoods at rates disproportionate to their White peers (Horsford, 2010; Serbulo, 2019), and those who attend desegregated schools may be more exposed to racial/ethnic discrimination and disproportionate discipline and special education assignments (Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Wells et al., 2004). Desegregation efforts in the mid-20th century also negatively impacted Black communities, more broadly, as school boards closed all-Black

schools and sent Black students to formerly all-White schools (McPherson, 2011; Pride & Woodard, 1985), and often fired Black teachers and administrators (Caruthers et al., 2021; Horsford, 2010; Morris, 2008). Altogether, this evidence suggests that, while desegregation efforts may diversify schools, they have not always fulfilled their ultimate goals of advancing educational equity.

Conflicting evidence about the “success” of desegregation stems, in part, from the political dynamics that shape how districts have implemented these policies. Simply put, districts have placed the burdens of desegregating schools on Black and other families of Color because, in most cases, White families have vehemently resisted desegregation (Horsford, 2010; Serbulo, 2019). In response to desegregation efforts that occurred in the decades following *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which deemed racially separate school systems unconstitutional, White parents and community members participated in mass protests, engaged in violence against Black students, and left desegregating districts for all-White schools elsewhere (McRae, 2018; Patterson, 2001; Pride & Woodard, 1985). Although the political dynamics of desegregation have evolved since the mid-20th century, White parents have continued to oppose these policies (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Castro et al., 2022; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). Studies of these recent desegregation efforts suggest that White parents have moved from overtly racist opposition to desegregation to seemingly race-neutral opposition; many have argued against desegregation policies because they would increase students’ commute times and disrupt students’ sense of community by sending them to schools outside their neighborhood (Castro et al., 2022; Lareau et al., 2018). Ultimately, resistance from this group of parents has led many districts to advance desegregation plans that are, in the words

of Amy Stuart Wells and colleagues (2005), “as palatable as possible for middle-class White parents and students” (Wells et al., 2005; p. 2147).

While community resistance has affected whether and how districts choose to implement desegregation policies, legal constraints have also undermined their capacity to advance policies that reduce segregation. These constraints stem from two cases, in particular: *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) and *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007). *Milliken* (1974) limited school systems’ ability to implement desegregation plans that crossed district boundary lines, consequently limiting their ability to overcome between-district segregation. In short, this case left racially/ethnically homogeneous districts, like those in the Northeast and Midwest, with few options to advance meaningful desegregation. Decades later, *Parents Involved* (2007) limited districts’ ability to use individual students’ race/ethnicity in school assignment decisions unless they were under court orders to desegregate, which fewer and fewer have been since the late 20th century (Reardon et al., 2012). *Parents Involved* (2007) was particularly consequential because desegregation policies that are race-neutral—meaning they do not account for students’ race/ethnicity and instead rely on less accurate proxies for race/ethnicity, like socioeconomic status—are less effective than race-conscious desegregation policies at mitigating racial/ethnic segregation (Reardon & Rhodes, 2013; Reardon et al., 2006).

Despite these political barriers to desegregation, some evidence points to windows of opportunity to advance policies that can reduce segregation *and* do not disproportionately burden students and families of Color. A few studies have documented instances of community support for desegregation from community members, including White parents, which indicates that political resistance to these policies is not a foregone conclusion (Baum, 2010; Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Orfield, 2012). And several scholars have argued that districts with

countywide or regional structures have the diversity required to advance desegregation, at least to some extent (Grant, 2011; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). However, several gaps in the school desegregation literature make it difficult to gauge whether and under what conditions these windows of opportunity to desegregate schools in an equitable manner exist.

First, studies of desegregation often focus on a subset of political factors that shape these efforts. For example, some focus on White parents' resistance to these policies (e.g., Bartels & Donato, 2009; Castro et al., 2022; McRae, 2018), while others focus on how legal constraints affect districts' capacity and will to advance them (e.g., Green & Gooden, 2016; McDermott et al., 2012). As a result, studies often do not identify how different types of political factors interact with one another to shape the desegregation policymaking process overall. Additionally, some political factors remain understudied. For instance, few scholars have addressed how the structural features of districts, including the formal policies that guide desegregation processes, shape these efforts and various policy actors' power to influence them (see Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; and Holme et al., 2014 for examples).

Second, studies of desegregation tend to focus on *either* the political dynamics of advancing these policies *or* the effects these policies have on racial/ethnic and/or socioeconomic segregation. Some studies suggest that political factors lead districts to enact desegregation policies that affect fewer students or disproportionately burden students and families of Color, or pressure them to abandon desegregation efforts altogether (Horsford et al., 2013; Serbulo, 2019; Siegel-Hawley, 2013). However, these studies generally do not suggest the *extent to which* political factors undermine desegregation efforts. Thus, the impact of the political dynamics of desegregation on these policies' potential to reduce segregation and, eventually, to advance educational equity remains an open question. Likewise, studies that focus on the segregation-

related outcomes of desegregation policies generally do not acknowledge the role that politics play in determining what policies are implemented. Measuring the impact of these policies only *after* they have gone through the political ringer may lead scholars and policymakers to falsely interpret their potential to reduce segregation. Distinguishing between desegregation policies' *potential* to reduce segregation and their *effects* on reducing segregation is important in determining which of these policies are worth investing in. And exploring how political factors mediate desegregation policies' potential to reduce and effects on reducing segregation is key to providing policymakers with insights about how to maximize these policies' potential to fulfill their aims.

This study addresses these gaps in the literature by exploring the politics and outcomes of one school district's recent effort to desegregate by redistricting, or redrawing school attendance boundary lines. The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)—a countywide, suburban school system in Maryland—attempted to redistrict during the 2019-2020 school year to address inequities between low-income students and their wealthier peers and to alleviate school overcrowding. Using a conceptual framework grounded in political theory, politics of education literature, and research on the roles of race and racism in policymaking, I explore the multifaceted political dynamics of this redistricting effort. I also employ a mixed methods case study design to identify how these political dynamics shaped the redistricting policy's prospects, or potential to reduce segregation between schools in HCPSS. I gauge the policy's prospects by capitalizing on different redistricting alternatives, or different redistricting plans, that the HCPSS

superintendent, Howard County Board of Education members, and other policy actors proposed, enacted (i.e., voted into effect), and implemented. I address two research questions in particular:

1. *How did political factors influence HCPSS's attempt to redistrict during the 2019-2020 school year?*
2. *To what extent did these factors affect the proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans' prospects for reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation between HCPSS schools?*

I use primarily qualitative data—including documents related to the redistricting process, observations of school board meetings, and interviews with key policy actors (e.g., HCPSS parents, Howard County elected officials)—to investigate the political factors that influenced the redistricting process. In alignment with my conceptual framework, I explore interactions among three levels of political factors: *contextual factors*, including the racialized social structure of U.S. society and legal constraints on school desegregation; *systemic factors*, including HCPSS's structure, procedures, and values; and *actor-level factors*, including the policy goals, power, and influence efforts of HCPSS's superintendent, school board members, and other policy actors. I use quantitative data—including HCPSS school enrollment rates and projections associated with the proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans—to identify how political factors affected these plans' potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation.

Quantitative data also provide supplementary information about the political factors that influenced the redistricting process, including the extent to which different actors prioritized desegregation in the redistricting plans they proposed.

Favorable Conditions for School Desegregation in Howard County, Maryland

Howard County is an ideal setting to study the relationship between the politics and prospects of redistricting because it possesses several favorable conditions for desegregating schools. First, HCPSS has a countywide district structure, which several scholars have argued is favorable for desegregation because it encompasses enough student diversity to advance desegregation, at least to some extent (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). Indeed, both Howard County and HCPSS are racially/ethnically diverse, and increasingly so. In 2019, the total population of Howard County was approximately 326,000. Roughly 50% of residents were White, 20% were Black, 19% were Asian, and 7% were Hispanic. Additionally, almost a quarter of residents spoke a language other than English, including Spanish (5%) or an Asian language (10%) (Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, 2020). HCPSS is even more racially/ethnically diverse than the county as a whole. In 2019, its total student population was roughly 59,000. Approximately 35% of students were White, 24% were Black, 23% were Asian, 12% were Hispanic, and 7% were some other race (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

The racial/ethnic diversity in HCPSS provided an opportunity for the district to advance racial/ethnic desegregation without having to cross district boundary lines and face legal constraints from *Milliken* (1974). Although there is no specific breakdown of school demographics that constitutes “desegregation,” the theory of action underlying desegregation suggests that, in order for this policy to have a chance at redistributing educational resources and opportunities more equitably, a school population must include students from minoritized (e.g., Black students) *and* non-minoritized groups (e.g., White students). As Table 1 demonstrates, HCPSS is roughly as racially/ethnically diverse as the student population in Maryland. The key differences between these two populations are that HCPSS serves a higher portion of Asian students and a lower portion of Black and Hispanic students than the state overall. HCPSS’s

population is also substantially more racially/ethnically diverse than some other districts in Maryland, including Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), which borders HCPSS and is predominantly Black and Hispanic (Table 1). Thus, in 2019, HCPSS had more potential than districts like BCPS to advance racial/ethnic desegregation, and it was about as racially/ethnically diverse a district as one could expect in the state of Maryland.

Table 1. *HCPSS District-Level Demographics Relative to the State of Maryland and a Neighboring District*

Group	% in Maryland Public Schools	% in the Howard County Public School System	% in Baltimore City Public Schools
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.3	0.2	0.2
Asian	6.6	22.7	0.9
Black	33.1	24	76.6
Hispanic	19.4	12	13.5
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1	0.2
Two or more races	4.8	6.3	1.1
White	35.6	34.6	7.6
<i>Socioeconomic Status</i>			
Receives Free or Reduced-Price Meals	42.3	19.9	54.1

Note: All data are from 2019. HCPSS race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data. BCPS and Maryland Public Schools race/ethnicity data are from the Maryland State Department of Education (2020). BCPS and Maryland Public Schools socioeconomic status data are from the Maryland State Department of Education (2023).

Although HCPSS is racially/ethnically diverse, it is a relatively wealthy district. In fact, Howard County is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation: in 2019, residents’ median household income was \$121,160—almost double the national median household income (U.S. News, 2020). Furthermore, fewer than a quarter of HCPSS students received Free or Reduced-Price Meals (FRPM) (Table 1)—a number that is substantially lower than the proportion of students who receive FRPM in Maryland public schools overall and in neighboring districts like BCPS. While limited socioeconomic diversity meant that HCPSS had less potential to advance socioeconomic desegregation than a district with a more even split between students who do and

do not receive FRPM, HCPSS could still advance it to some degree by redistributing FRPM and non-FRPM students more evenly across its schools.

The second favorable condition for desegregation in HCPSS was the district's espoused commitment to educational equity, which aligns with the purpose of desegregating schools. HCPSS has a Strategic Call to Action (SCTA), entitled "Learning and Leading with Equity," that focuses on "ensur[ing] academic success and social-emotional well-being for each student in an inclusive and nurturing environment that closes opportunity gaps" (Howard County Public School System, 2022a). The SCTA outlines several goals and desired outcomes that are equity-oriented, including hiring and maintaining a diverse staff, ensuring that students of different racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds are represented in the curriculum, and developing family and community partnerships to "maximize resources and learning opportunities" for students (Howard County Public School System, 2022a).

Although the SCTA itself is simply a document, evidence suggests that it has guided district policies and practices. Each year, HCPSS publishes an annual report that assesses the district's progress along with the desired outcomes outlined in the SCTA. The report describes the degree to which HPCSS has fulfilled each outcome and offers next steps to continue progressing toward its goals. For example, the 2018-2019 report indicated that the desired outcome of ensuring that "graduation rates among high schools and demographic groups are at exemplary levels" was an "area of concern" for HCPSS because the four-year graduation rate that year had decreased overall from 92.3% to 92.0% and because rates for Black and FRPM students, which were lower than the district average, also decreased. The report outlined several strategies that the district would employ in response to these disparities, including efforts to increase student engagement—which they believed would subsequently increase graduation

rates—by identifying students with low attendance rates, expanding beyond school opportunities for middle and high school students, and engaging family and community members to promote graduation (Howard County Public School System, 2019b).

Superintendent Michael Martirano, who served HCPSS during the 2019-2020 redistricting effort, introduced the SCTA when he became interim superintendent in 2017. Martirano is a White man and a long-time educator whose children attended HCPSS schools. The plan reflected his own espoused commitments to equity. As he has said, “Every student requires different kinds of support and instruction to best meet their needs” (Magill, 2017). In addition to implementing the SCTA early in his tenure, Superintendent Martirano also created additional positions in HCPSS focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (Magill, 2017). Ultimately, the district’s and the superintendent’s commitments to equity—coupled with the fact that HCPSS’s policy on school attendance boundary adjustments granted the superintendent power to guide redistricting processes by enabling him to develop a redistricting plan for the board to consider (Howard County Public School System, 2022b)—suggest that HCPSS might have been inclined to redraw school boundaries in ways that had the potential to further advance equity. But because *espoused* commitments to equity do not always translate to equity-oriented policies, this study also serves as a test of whether HCPSS and its superintendent were, indeed, willing to “lead with equity” in redistricting.

Finally, Howard County is home to Columbia, a planned community built in the 1960s that businessman James Rouse designed to foster racial/ethnic and socioeconomic integration. Columbia is located on the eastern side of the county and serves as its economic center. In the 1960s, Howard County was predominantly White and rural, but Rouse wanted it to be “a garden for the growing of people,” where everyone resided within walking distance of their place of

work, grocery store, and other essential needs; where people of all income levels could afford to live; and where people of all backgrounds lived in harmony (Stamp, 2014). Because Rouse wanted Columbia to be “economically diverse, poly-cultural, multi-faith, and inter-racial” (Columbia Association, 2019b), he designed villages that had mixed-income housing options and built low-income apartments next to single-family homes (Stamp, 2014). Rouse also built interfaith centers, which different religious groups were to share (Hurley, 2017).

A look at Columbia’s demographics decades later suggests that Rouse’s plan to create an integrated community may have worked. Columbia, like HCPSS and the county more broadly, is racially/ethnically diverse. In 2019, 47% of residents were White, just over a quarter were Black, 13% were Asian, and 7% were Hispanic or Latinx. Rouse’s guiding value of integration appears to be ever-present in Columbia, too. Residents continue to espouse the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Hurley, 2017), and the Columbia Association, which manages Columbia’s operations and resources, has continued to prioritize offering residents a variety of housing options, ranging from subsidized apartments to single-family homes (Columbia Association, 2019a).

Altogether, these favorable conditions for desegregation make HCPSS’s recent redistricting effort a “critical case” (Yin, 2018; p. 49) of school desegregation. Yin (2018) argues that scholars may use critical cases to “test” (Yin, 2018; p. 29) the theoretical or empirical propositions associated with a phenomenon. Given the aforementioned evidence that political barriers often undermine desegregation efforts, this study tests the proposition that under *favorable* political conditions—like those in Howard County—desegregation is a feasible policy goal for school districts. Put differently, if desegregation is not a feasible policy goal in Howard County, it is not likely to be a feasible policy goal in districts where these or other favorable

conditions are not present. Understanding whether and under what conditions desegregating schools is a feasible goal for districts may provide policymakers with insights about how to advance these policies in ways that maximize their potential to reduce segregation and promote educational equity, and may provide scholars with directions for future research that can further support policymakers' desegregation efforts.

Overview of Chapters

The following chapters provide detailed information about the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of this study, the methods I used to conduct this study, the findings, and their significance. Chapter 2 describes the study's conceptual framework, and Chapter 3 organizes relevant research on school desegregation into concepts from this framework to identify the key takeaways from and gaps in this literature. Chapter 4 describes the mixed methods case study design I employed, as well as data sources, data collection, and analysis strategies. Chapters 5 through 9 present the findings of this study. These chapters are organized in alignment with my conceptual framework. I begin by discussing the contextual and systemic political factors that motivated the redistricting process and then discuss how contextual, systemic, and actor-level political factors interact throughout the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of the policy process. The final findings chapter discusses the outcomes of the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. Chapter 10 describes the significance of this study, addresses the study's limitations, and presents directions for future research on the politics and prospects of school desegregation policies.

Chapter 2: A Conceptual Framework for Studying Desegregation Policymaking

The conceptual framework for this study is a political model grounded in classic theories of political systems, power, and influence (Dahl, 1984; Easton, 1965; Schattschneider, 1960), scholars' adaptations of those theories (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Malen, 2006; Mazzoni, 1991), and literature on the role of race and racism in policymaking (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Harris, 1993; Ray, 2019). This chapter explains the utility of political models for studying school desegregation policies and describes the particular model that guides this study, which arrays the contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics that shape policy processes and outcomes. The model offers an analytic tool to identify how political factors erode or strengthen desegregation policies and, in doing so, generates practical insights that could help policymakers advance desegregation despite formidable political barriers.

What Are Political Models and Why Should We Use Them to Study Desegregation Policymaking?

Political models are conceptual tools that explain how political dynamics shape policymaking. While many versions of these models exist, they generally draw from work in two traditions of political science: one that focuses on the role of political systems in policymaking and another that focuses on the role of individual policy actors in policymaking (Gamson, 1968; Kanter, 1972). Easton's (1965) political systems theory focuses on the role of political systems, including governments and other institutions that have decision-making authority, in policymaking. Generally, Easton's theory suggests that conflicts in the broader social environment over resources (e.g., money) or values (e.g., equality) prompt political systems to advance policies that allocate those resources or values in a manner that resolves the conflicts and retains public support for the system. Other models focus on how policy actors, including

those who operate and are served by political systems, use their power to influence policymaking in the direction of their interests (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Bardach, 1977; Dahl, 1984; Schattschneider, 1975). Gamson (1968) suggests that an actor-oriented model takes "the vantage point of potential partisans and emphasizes the process by which such groups attempt to influence the choices of authorities or the structure within which decisions occur" (p. 2). Furthermore, whereas political systems theory focuses on how political systems *regulate* conflict through policy, actor-oriented models focus on the *strategy* of conflict that actors use to pursue their policy goals (Gamson, 1968; Kanter, 1972).

As Gamson (1968) explains, the political systems and actor-oriented traditions are "dual perspectives" (p. 2) on policymaking that are often complementary. Consequently, scholars of political science, public policy, and education policy have bridged these perspectives to create political models that offer a more comprehensive view of the contextual, systemic, and actor-level factors that shape policy processes and outcomes (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Campbell & Mazzoni, 1976; Malen, 2006; Marsh, 2012).

There is a vast literature that documents the political dynamics of school desegregation (described in greater detail in the next chapter), and political models can provide a comprehensive view of the policy process by clarifying how and at what phase contextual, systemic, and actor-level dynamics constrain or foster the advancement of desegregation policies. Thus, in addition to providing insights for scholars regarding directions for future research, political models can also point policymakers toward windows of opportunity to advance desegregation policies.

A Model of the Political Process and Prospects of Advancing Desegregation Policies

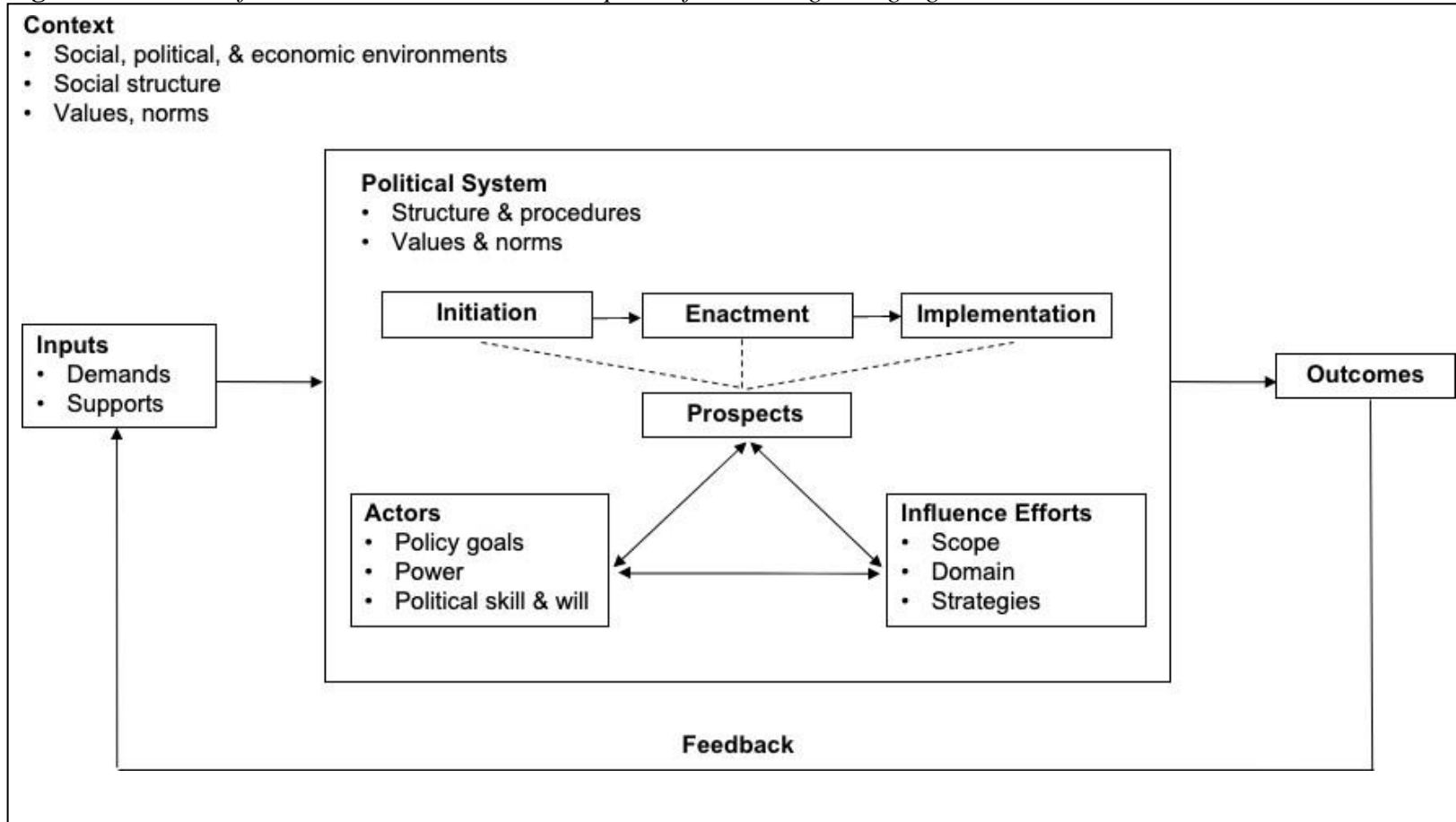
While drawing primarily from political theory, the political model that guides this study also draws on literature on race and racism in policymaking. Although existing political models provide strong grounding for gauging how contextual, systemic, and actor-level factors influence policy processes and outcomes, most are race-neutral, and thus susceptible to overlooking the pervasive roles that race and racism play in policymaking (López, 2003). To better capture how race shapes the advancement of redistributive policies, this model incorporates literature on how race and racism shape social and institutional structures, as well as actors' power to influence policymaking (Bell Jr., 1980; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Harris, 2003; Ray, 2019).

The following sections describe the components of this model (Figure 1), which suggests that three sets of factors interact to shape policy processes and outcomes: 1) *contextual factors*, including the social, political, and economic environments, social structure, and values and norms surrounding a policy effort; 2) *systemic factors*, including the structure, procedures, values, and norms of the political system(s) advancing a policy; and 3) *actor-level factors*, including the actors involved in, or excluded from, policymaking, their policy goals, power, and political skill and will, and their efforts to influence the policy process. These factors interact throughout three policy phases: 1) *initiation*, during which actors identify policy problems and propose potential policies to address them; 2) *enactment*, during which actors choose to authorize one policy among many alternatives; and 3) *implementation*, during which enacted policies are translated into practice. The political dynamics that occur within each phase shape a policy's *prospects*, or potential to fulfill its aims, and its eventual *outcomes*.

Context and Inputs

Context, or the environment in which policy making takes place, generates inputs that may prompt a political system, such as a local government or school district, to consider

Figure 1. *A Model of the Political Process and Prospects of Advancing Desegregation Policies*



Adapted from Easton (1965), Malen (2006), Malen (1983), Geary (1992).

advancing a policy (Easton, 1965). The environment includes areas outside the formal political system, such as a society's economy, social and governance structures, culture, and other systems (Dahl, 1984; Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Wirt & Kirst, 1975). Inputs fall into two primary categories: *demands*, which include conflicts in the environment or within a political system, and *supports*, which include the public's belief in and loyalty to a system (Easton, 1965).

Demands

Demands act as stressors on political systems (Easton, 1965; Wirt & Kirst, 1975). In short, they give systems a job to do. David Easton (1965) describes demands as what the public thinks "ought to be done" or "ought to be done in this way, not that way" (Easton, 1965; p. 49). They may stem from societal conflict over the distribution of scarce resources, competing values, or competing conceptions of the same value (Dahl, 1984; Malen & Knapp, 1997; Wirt & Kirst, 1975). These and other conflicts may be prevalent in diverse societies, given that people from different racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and other groups may have competing views, ideologies, and policy priorities (Easton, 1965).

Conflicts over education, in particular, may stem from disagreements about which values should reign and what they look like in practice (Cuban, 1990). Take students' assignments to schools, for example. While some argue that parents have a right to send their children to schools of their choosing, others argue for more regulated assignment policies that they believe will foster greater educational equity, given evidence that school choice may foster racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation (Bifulco et al., 2009; Ni, 2012; Stein, 2015). Yet, even those who agree that assignment policies should prioritize equity may disagree about what equity means. For instance, to some, equity means that students have equal access to the resources and opportunities they need to pursue their own educational goals, while to others, it means that

students are achieving equal outcomes on a particular measure (e.g., college attendance) (Bulkley, 2013; Fishkin, 2014). Value tensions like these have persisted for decades, and although they may never be fully resolved, the conflicts they generate pressure political systems to enact policies that regulate them.

Social Structure

A society's social structure is one key contextual factor that both generates demands and determines which and whose demands political systems address. The U.S. social structure is largely shaped by race, a socially constructed category that privileges White people and disenfranchises people of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Although racism is often conceived of as an individual phenomenon in which actors hold racist prejudices or discriminate against actors of another race, it is also a structural phenomenon. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018) describes racism as “a network of social relations at social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races” (p. 18). Historically, these social, political, economic, and ideological systems have invested in White people by allocating property, resources, and opportunities *to* them and *away from* Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other people of Color (Harris, 1993; Lipsitz, 1995). These systems discriminate against people of Color so that White people may maintain the “material benefits” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; p. 9) and power that stem from a racist social structure (Rothstein, 2017). However, they tend to operate covertly, meaning that how they reinforce and perpetuate inequality may be invisible to those who are not looking for them (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Rothstein, 2017). Bonilla-Silva (2018) describes this phenomenon as “color-blind racism” (p. 2) because it reproduces racial inequality through practices that are “subtle, institutional, and apparently nonracial” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; p. 3). Recognition that racism operates in “color-

blind” or covert ways is also a tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT). As David Gillborn and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2010) write, “Within CRT ... the more important, hidden, and pervasive form of White supremacy lies in the operation of forces that saturate the everyday mundane actions and policies that shape the world in the interests of White people” (p. 39). Bonilla-Silva (2018) further argues that, because racism operates in such covert ways, it is a “formidable political tool” (Bonilla-Silva, p. 3) that allows systems to maintain racial hierarchies without appearing to be racist.

Values and Norms

A society’s social structure shapes its values and norms, and in doing so, it determines which and whose demands political systems deem legitimate and worthy of addressing (Dahl, 1984; Malen, 2006; March & Olsen, 1989; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Parsons, 1960). Because U.S. systems have been structured to maintain White power, American values and norms tend to privilege White interests. More specifically, the values that guide education policymaking in the U.S. have generally drawn attention away from educational inequities and masked the pervasiveness of racism in schools and society more broadly. For example, Henry Levin (2002) suggests that the values guiding education policymaking in the U.S. include: 1) *choice*, meaning families’ rights to choose schools for their children based on their own values, philosophies, religions, and preferences; 2) *efficiency*, or maximizing educational outcomes amidst resource constraints; 3) *equality*, meaning that all students, regardless of racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, or other identities, have equal access to educational opportunities, resources, and/or outcomes; and 4) *social cohesion*, referring to the democratic purpose of schooling to prepare students to be active, productive participants in society. As evidenced by recurrent value conflicts in education (Cuban, 1990), these values are often in tension with one another, and given that the social

structure privileges White interests, systems often prioritize choice, efficiency, or social cohesion at the cost of equality, which typically requires a redistribution of resources that could threaten the racial hierarchy. Furthermore, if and when systems promote equality, they may do so with weak or symbolic policies that fail to address structural barriers (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Derrick Bell's (1980) principle of interest convergence offers one explanation for this phenomenon. Bell argued that political systems will only enact policies to redress racial inequities, for which Black people and other people of Color have long advocated, when those policies converge with dominant (i.e., White) interests. In other words, political systems legitimize and prioritize White demands and interests, and may only address the demands and interests of people of Color when they align with White demands and interests.

Values and norms influence policy making at the local level too. McGivney and Moynihan's (1972) "zone of tolerance" concept and Oakes and colleagues (2005) "zone of mediation" framework explain how relationships between society, community, and school districts influence what policies districts enact. McGivney and Moynihan (1972) suggest that communities' priorities with regard to education—which may reflect or conflict with societal values and norms—determine their zones of tolerance, or the types of policies they will accept. Oakes and colleagues (2005) suggest that districts are "mediating institutions" (p. 287) that channel societal values and norms into local communities through education policies. When these policies conflict with local priorities, communities may resist them. Thus, while societal values and norms influence what policies districts try to advance, local values and norms influence what policies communities will accept, and "set the parameters" (Oakes et al., 2005; p. 288) on policy actions districts can and will take. Zones of tolerance are neither shared across communities nor static within communities, and may vary depending on the policy issue at hand.

For instance, communities may have particularly narrow zones of tolerance for redistributive policies, like desegregation or detracking (Boyd, 1976). However, studies that identify instances of parental support for desegregation (e.g., Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009)—described in greater detail in the next chapter—suggest that zones of tolerance for this policy may vary across communities.

The Nature of Conflict

The nature of the conflict also determines whether a political system will address a demand. Conflicts have four dimensions: scope, visibility, intensity, and direction (Adamany, 1972; Schattschneider, 1975). A conflict's *scope* refers to how many actors are engaged in a conflict. For instance, are many or few actors involved? Conflicts in which few actors are involved may favor more powerful actors, while broader conflicts allow less powerful actors more opportunity to advance their policy goals. *Visibility* refers to how recognizable or relevant a conflict is to various actors. For example, is the issue at hand something that affects most people in their day-to-day lives, or is it only relevant to a small group of individuals? Conflict may occur more readily over visible issues, and actors may be more likely to join those that are more visible than those that are less visible. The *intensity* of a conflict refers to how intensely actors feel about the issue at hand. The more intensely actors feel about an issue, the more intense the conflict over that issue will be. A conflict's intensity greatly influences its *direction*, or how it divides actors. For instance, does it fragment actors into many small groups, or does it split them into two larger ones? Schattschneider (1975) suggests that more intense conflicts tend to divide actors into two primary groups. Although actors within these two larger groups may disagree about particulars, like what policy solutions would best resolve the issue at hand, they often will lay those smaller disagreements to rest in favor of coalitions that strengthen their chances of

influencing change. Altogether, conflicts that are broad in scope, highly visible, and very intense are more likely to elicit a policy response from a political system (Adamany, 1972; Schattschneider, 1975).

Supports

In addition to generating demands on a political system, the environment also generates supports for it. Whereas demands give systems a job to do, supports give them *legitimacy*, or the right and responsibility to do that job; consequently, supports are critical to a system's survival over time (Dahl, 1984; Easton, 1965; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Supports often come from the political community, or members of a political system who may vary in ideology or culture but are "drawn together by the fact that they participate in a common structure and set of processes, however tight or loose the ties may be" (Easton, 1965; p. 177). Supports may include a general confidence in the system; buy-in to its ideals, organizations, and procedures; and acceptance of its decisions. Easton (1965) suggests that the political community may support "goals or ideals by literally fighting for them or by merely espousing them, an institution by verbally defending it, the actions of others by joining them, and persons by voting for them or acting on their behalf" (p. 159). I describe political systems' strategies for gaining support from the political community later in this chapter.

Political Systems

Political systems—the institutions that receive inputs in the form of demands and supports from the environment—are responsible for the authoritative allocation of values in a society (Easton, 1965), meaning they advance policies that determine how power and other resources are "shaped and shared within the community" (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950; p. 200). These institutions "define the framework within which politics takes place" (March & Olsen,

1989) through their structures, procedures, and values. Easton (1965) refers to the individuals that operate a political system as “authorities” and to the group of authorities running a system at a given time as a “political regime.” Regimes set the tone of the system by establishing the structures, procedures, and values that guide decision making (Easton, 1965).

Three primary political systems play a role in education policy making in the United States: local school districts, state governments, and the federal government. Education has historically been a local endeavor (Henig, 2013). In the early 19th century, one-room schoolhouses, run by their small surrounding communities, were the governing bodies of education. As American society industrialized in the early 20th century, legislators sought more control over education and these hyper-local schooling arrangements were replaced by town or regional school districts—the organizational units that we recognize today (Gamson & Hodge, 2016; Kaestle, 1983; Scribner, 2016; Tyack, 1974). The U.S. education system began to shift away from local control in the mid-20th century. Many small districts consolidated into larger districts; the Supreme Court became highly involved in local education matters (in large part through desegregation cases, which are described in the next chapter), paving the way for more federal involvement; and an increased federal role brought states more power over local school districts (Gamson & Hodge, 2016; Henig, 2013; Malen, 2011; Scribner, 2016). Although districts maintain a semblance of power through their ability to implement (or not implement) policies, some scholars argue federal and state governments have “relegated local school boards, district officials and site educators to a reactive, arguably subservient role in that they are required to meet the goals developed elsewhere with the resource allocations determined elsewhere or experience the actions set elsewhere” (Malen, 2011; p. 38).

Although federal and state governments and school districts often compete with one another for power over education policy making, they share two common purposes. First, these systems seek to regulate conflict by addressing demands from the broader sociopolitical context, like those described in the previous section, or from within the political system itself. While external demands typically involve value conflicts or unequal resource distributions, internal demands include pressure to alter systems' structures, procedures, or decision-making processes (Easton, 1965). Addressing demands helps systems to fulfill their second purpose: to preserve legitimacy by maintaining support from the political community.

Regulating Conflict

As previously described, contextual factors such as social structure, societal values and norms, and the nature of a conflict influence a demand's likelihood of being addressed by a political system. But features of the political system itself also play a significant role in whether and how demands are addressed. These institutional features are not neutral; they prioritize some issues over others, ignore or suppress the demands of some groups over others, and are structured in ways that empower some actors within the system while disenfranchising others (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; March & Olsen, 1989; Schattschneider, 1960). Key features include institutions' structures, procedures, values, and norms.

Structure and Procedures

The structure and procedures of a political system influence whether, how, and by whom demands are addressed. First and foremost, institutional structure determines which demands make it into a political system and have a chance at making it onto policy makers' agendas (Easton, 1965). In democracies, all members of society have the potential to raise demands by protesting, contacting their representatives, or otherwise notifying the "authorities" of their local,

state, or federal government about the issues they want a system to address. However, political systems are organized to let some demands in while others “wither on the vine” (Easton, 1965; p. 178). For example, systems may force demands into different “action channels” (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; p. 301), or processes through which they must go in order to get addressed. Although these channels may improve systems’ efficiency, they often create barriers that slow the political process, reduce the number of demands systems must deal with at a given time, and deter actors from raising demands in the first place (Easton, 1965).

In addition to reducing the number of demands that systems must address, institutional structures and procedures determine the actors involved in a policy process, the issues about which and processes through which they make decisions, and the power they have to influence those decisions (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; March & Olsen, 1989; Mazzoni, 1991; Meltsner, 1972; Ray, 2019). Tim Mazzoni (1991) refers to the different structures in which education policies are made as arenas, or “political interactions characterizing particular decision sites” (p. 116). Different arenas prioritize different actors. As Betty Malen writes, “Different arenas may be more or less open, accessible, and receptive to different players and their points of view” (Malen, 2006; p. 86). For example, the centralization of American schooling has shifted education from a single-purpose to a general-purpose arena. Single-purpose arenas bring actors like school board members, superintendents, educators, and parents to the policymaking table, while general-purpose arenas bring mayors, governors, state legislators, presidents, and interest groups. In addition to prioritizing different actors, these arenas also prioritize different issues. Whereas education is the sole focus of a school board, it is one of many social issues that a mayor, governor, or president must address, meaning that actors may have to fight harder to get education issues on agendas in general-purpose arenas (Henig, 2013).

Whereas arenas determine which actors and issues are prioritized in a policy process, the procedures associated with those arenas establish the rules that actors must follow when raising or addressing demands and shape their power to influence the policy process (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; March & Olsen, 1989). For instance, procedures establish the formal roles within institutions, the paths through which actors gain access to those roles, and the power associated with those roles. Procedures may also determine which actors have access to key power resources, like information about an issue or the "authorities" who make decisions (Allison & Zelikow, 1999).

Given that institutions are embedded in societies, they are necessarily shaped by the social structure. Thus, in the U.S., racism shapes the aforementioned structures and features of political systems, and subsequently plays a major role in determining actors' power to influence the policy process. Victor Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organizations explains how racism is embedded in political systems. More specifically, he describes how political systems (along with other institutions) are "meso-level social structures that limit the personal agency and collective efficacy of subordinate racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant racial group" (p. 36). For example, institutions may concentrate people of Color at the bottom of organization hierarchies and allow White actors disproportionate access to resources, power, and agency. This theory aligns with Bell's (1980) principle of interest convergence, which suggests that White actors' interests are prioritized over the interests of actors of Color.

Values and Norms

A political system's values and norms also determine which (and whose) demands it will address (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Easton, 1965; Malen, 2006; March & Olsen, 1989). Given that institutions "shape and are shaped by the larger social system" (Tyack, 1974; p. 9), their

values and norms are influenced by societal values and norms. For instance, in a society that values democratic participation, institutions may adopt a democratic governance structure and procedures that allow political communities to participate in decision-making. Institutional values and norms also constrain actors' behavior (March & Olsen, 1989). In contrast to an institution with a democratic structure, an institution that values authority and centralizes power may restrict actors' participation in decision-making.

Different policymaking arenas may possess different values and norms. For example, Henig (2013) suggests that single-purpose institutions like school districts value expertise and professionalism, while general-purpose institutions like city councils value majoritarianism and efficiency. So, just as arenas' structure and procedures prioritize different actors, so too do their values and norms. The values and norms of the authorities who operate political systems also determine what demands systems will address (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Kingdon, 2003). Allison and Zelikow (1999) suggest that issues are more likely to appear on policy makers' agendas when policy makers view them as important. Similarly, Kingdon (2003) argues that policy makers' values, personal experiences with issues, and receptivity to the political community's concerns influence whether they will address particular demands. The racial/ethnic identities of authorities may also shape whose demands systems address. For example, given that White people tend to be concentrated at the top of organizational hierarchies and people of Color tend to be concentrated at the bottom, systems may be more likely to address demands from White actors than from actors of Color (Bell, 1980; Ray, 2019).

Retaining Legitimacy

In addition to regulating conflict, political systems seek to retain their legitimacy. Political systems may attempt to gain legitimacy by inculcating in the political community that

“it is right and proper ... to accept and obey the authorities and to abide by the requirements of the regime” (Easton, 1965; p. 278), or by embarking on efforts to get authorities to buy into institutional procedures, values, and norms (Easton, 1965). One strategy that systems use to gain support from both the political community and authorities is conforming their aims and missions to societal values and norms (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Rowan & Miskel, 1999; Parsons, 1960). Yet, conforming to societal values and norms often conflicts with systems’ ability to address demands efficiently. For example, political systems that adopt democratic procedures in alignment with democratic values may gain support from members of the political community, who want a say in governance, but simultaneously decrease the speed (and thus, the frequency) with which they make policy decisions.

Political systems attempt to cope with the tradeoff between legitimacy and efficiency by decoupling their *social* and *technical* operations; that is, they create subsystems within the organization that separately work to accomplish the oft-competing goals of maintaining legitimacy and addressing demands efficiently (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Parsons, 1960; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). For example, scholars have described education as a “loosely coupled” system (Rowan & Miskel, 1999; p. 363) because it separates administrative mechanisms (e.g., certification, accreditation), which serve to maintain the public’s confidence in the system, from technical activities and outcomes (e.g., teaching and learning) that occur within the system itself (Meyer & Rowan, 1978; Rowan & Miskel, 1999). Ray (2019) builds on this work to describe how organizations use decoupling as a strategy to gain (or preserve) a progressive, equity-oriented reputation while maintaining (intentionally or unintentionally) racist structures, procedures, and norms. For example, as Ray (2019) explains, “diversity policies often serve a ceremonial public-relations function but do little to change the racial distribution of

organizational power” (Ray, 2019; p. 42). These and other symbolic policies allow systems to satisfy the political community enough to temporarily resolve conflicts resulting from dissonance between societal values and norms and the community’s perceptions of the system’s values and norms without actually addressing that dissonance (Edelman, 1964; Rosen, 2009).

Policy Actors

Political systems and the contexts in which they are situated interact with a third set of factors—actor-level factors—to shape policymaking. Contextual and systemic factors shape the contours of policymaking, while policy actors engage in the on-the-ground politics that mobilize and characterize policy processes and affect policy outcomes. The two primary sets of actors involved in policymaking are the individuals who operate the political system advancing a policy and the individuals who operate it (March & Olsen, 1989) and the “political community” (Easton, 1965; p. 177) that the political system serves, which consists of people “drawn together by the fact that they participate in a common structure and set of processes” (Easton, 1965; p. 177). But other actors may be involved in the policy process too. In education policymaking, specifically, common actors may include teachers, administrators, school boards, parents, and individuals involved with market-based education reforms, including businesses and charter management organizations. Less common actors like foundations, research centers, and academics may also participate in education policymaking. In recent decades, interest groups—organized or unorganized assemblies of actors with common policy goals—have played an increasing role in education policymaking (Malen, 2001). Furthermore, as education increasingly becomes a general-purpose government issue, local, state, and national government officials like mayors, governors, and presidents may play a role in education policymaking (Henig, 2013).

These and other policy actors may be visible during the policy process, meaning they receive publicity and are high-profile actors, or they may be hidden, meaning they work behind the scenes to influence policymaking (Kingdon, 2003). Visible actors (e.g., the U.S. President) often set the agenda of a political system and, consequently, play a large role in determining what problems the system will try to address with policy. Hidden actors typically play a smaller role in agenda setting but a larger role in the specification of alternative policy options. For example, since these actors tend to be very familiar with the policy issues at hand, they may propose different policies and deliberate with one another over which proposals the system should consider. While these actors are not center stage, they often play a significant role in determining what policy solutions are considered and, subsequently, which ones are advanced.

Policy actors have different and often competing policy goals, power resources, and political skill and will to deploy those resources to advance their policy goals. Altogether, these factors affect the directions in which actors attempt to sway policy processes, the strategies they use to exert influence over policymaking, and their capacity and will to do so (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Kingdon, 2003).

Policy Goals

Policy actors' interests and values drive their policy goals, or the policy outcomes they desire (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Dahl, 1984; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950; Meltsner, 1972; Schattschneider, 1975). Given the pluralist nature of American society, actors' policy goals are often in conflict with one another (Cuban, 1990; Dahl, 1984; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950). While some goals may stem from shared interests and values, such as democratic governance, others may be related to their individual interests and values or those of a subgroup (Schattschneider, 1975). For example, White actors may seek to preserve their status at the top of the social

hierarchy, while racially/ethnically minoritized actors may advocate for changes in the social structure and the distribution of resources. Actors may also pursue the interests of the institution they represent (Allison & Zelikow, 1999); Allison and Zelikow (1999) suggest that “where you stand depends on where you sit” (p. 307), meaning that actors’ policy goals are influenced if not determined by their institutional affiliations and their positions within those institutions.

Power

Actors possess different degrees of power to pursue their policy goals. Power refers to actors’ capacity to pursue their policy goals (Gamson, 1968; Kanter, 1979; Wrong, 1979). In short, power is “potential without direction” (Gamson, 1968; p. 1); it suggests actors’ *potential* to influence policymaking but does not necessarily mean that they have *exerted* influence. Power is relational, meaning that actors possess power *over* other actors and *in* particular domains (e.g., policy arenas) (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970). Power is unevenly distributed among policy actors (Dahl, 1984; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950), in part because of the inequitable social structure of American society. As previously described, White policy actors acquire power from social and institutional hierarchies that prioritize their policy goals over the policy goals of racially/ethnically minoritized actors (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Ray, 2019). Consequently, White actors may possess more power to influence policymaking than actors of Color. For example, institutional leaders may incorporate White actors’ interests in a policy they are enacting, but fail to include the interests of actors of Color. Yet, while power is inequitably distributed among policy actors, it is not always zero-sum (Dahl, 1984). In other words, one actor’s possession of power does not necessarily preclude others from exercising it.

Policy actors may also derive power from sources beyond the social structure. Perhaps the most obvious source of power is formal authority, such as a leadership position in a political

system (Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950). Formal authority grants actors access to and control over information and the ability to set policy agendas, which determine whether a policy issue sees the light of day and shape how it is addressed. Actors' sources of power may also include control over the flow of resources (e.g., money, personnel, support) to other actors; control over boundaries or the interface between different elements of an organization; and the ability to "define the reality of others" (p. 176) by crafting images, ideas, and values to describe a situation in the way they wish it to be described (Morgan, 1986). Additionally, actors may gain power from coalitions with other actors, because an increase in the number of actors advocating for an issue may increase its visibility. Coalitions may also draw their power from the resources of individual members, such as money, time, and social status. However, coalitions run the risk of being undermined by disagreements among individual actors. Furthermore, while there is power in numbers, individual actors' resources are typically more liquid, or easily accessible, than groups' resources (Wrong, 1979).

Political Skill and Will

In addition to possessing differential power resources, actors also possess differential political skill and will to deploy their resources (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Dahl, 1984; Meltsner, 1972; Wrong, 1979). Political skill refers to how effectively actors employ their resources. For instance, actors must gauge which resources to deploy at which point in the policy process to maximize their potential for influence (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Meltsner, 1972). Political will refers to actors' willingness to deploy those resources. Actors' political skill and will may also be viewed as a source of power, because others actors' perceptions of their power resources and political skill and will to deploy them may affect whether and how those actors engage in their own influence efforts (Allison & Zelikow, 1999).

Influence Efforts

The convergence of actors' power and political skill and will, along with the contextual and systemic factors previously described, shape actors' capacity to influence the policymaking process in the direction of their policy goals (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Dahl, 1984; Schattschneider, 1975). Dahl (1984) describes influence as the extent to which an actor affects another actors' actions or interests. Notably, actors' influence is not to be conflated with their power, for they must have the political skill and will to deploy their resources if they are to exert influence (Dahl, 1984).

Scope and Domain

Dahl (1984) suggests that analysts must ask of actors' influence: "influential over what actors with respect to what matters?" (p. 27). The first part of the question—*influence over what actors*—is the *domain* of actors' influence (Dahl, 1984). For example, a university professor may have influence over the students who take her classes in the education department, but not over students who take her colleague's classes in the biology department. The latter part of the question—*influence with respect to what matters*—is the *scope* of actors' influence (Dahl, 1984). The scope of the education professor's influence over her students is likely over matters related to education, and more specifically, the education matters she teaches in her classes. She likely has little influence over her students on matters such as where they shop for groceries or what they cook for dinner.

Strategies

Like the list of actors' potential power resources, the list of political strategies that actors may use to influence a policy process is practically infinite. General groups of strategies include *persuading* other actors to change their policy goals by citing research or by omitting aspects of

the policy issue that may undermine the sanctity of their goals (Dahl, 1984), *inducing* them by adding advantages that make their policy goals seem more desirable, or *constraining* them by adding new disadvantages that make competing policy goals seem less desirable (Gamson, 1968; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950). Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that actors may also exert influence by who and what enters the policy arena. This strategy, which they describe as *nondecision-making*, involves actors devoting their resources to excluding certain actors from the policymaking process or keeping certain issues off the agenda. For instance, actors may threaten other actors to deter them from participating, delegitimize an issue they are advocating for or their stance on that issue, or reshape a system's structure to create barriers that preclude them from engaging in the policy process.

Actors may also seek to exert influence by manipulating how other actors view policy issues and proposed solutions to them (Edelman, 1964; Edelman, 1988; Elder & Cobb, 1983). Edelman (1988) describes how actors create a political spectacle, which “constructs and reconstructs social problems, crises, enemies, and leaders” and “plays a central role in winning support and opposition for political causes and policies” (Edelman, 1988; p. 1). Elder and Cobb (1983) further suggest that actors operating political systems may employ symbols as a strategy to retain legitimacy for the system. Symbols help actors shape the spectacle in their favor by evoking attitudes, emotions, and perceptions that generate support for their policy goals. Edelman (1964) describes two types of symbols: 1) *referential symbols*, or representations of elements of a policy issue that help actors shape how other actors view it; and 2) *condensation symbols*, which “condense” emotions about a policy issue into a “symbolic event, sign, or action” (p. 6). Referential symbols may include statistics related to a policy problem or cost figures associated with a proposed policy solution. On the other hand, condensation symbols

may include patriotic signs like the American flag or American values. Actors employ these symbols to garner support for their policy goals. For example, some White actors have coopted the principle of equal opportunity—which has historically referred to attaining equal rights for minoritized groups—to resist affirmative action policies, or those that intend to remove structural barriers that limit minoritized groups’ access to certain jobs and universities, by claiming that those policies give preferential treatment to people of Color and unfairly disadvantage White people (Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Relatedly, actors may attempt to frame policy issues in ways that garner support for their position (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; McAdam, 1996). Gamson and Modigliani (1987) define a frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them” (p. 376). Furthermore, a frame “suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” and “generally implies a policy direction or implicit answer to what should be done about the issue” (p. 376). McAdam (1996) explains how some leaders of the civil rights movement used issue framing as a strategy to “assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (McAdam, 1996; p. 339). For example, activists like Martin Luther King Jr. described their policy goals using the language of Christianity, democracy, and nonviolence, which aligned with American values. These strategies helped them gain positive and sympathetic coverage from the media that attracted broader support for the movement.

Gauging Influence

Influence can be difficult to measure, given that policy efforts can involve a plethora of visible and hidden actors, complex and interrelated issues, and endless influence tactics. In an

effort to help analysts wrangle this complex phenomenon, political scholars have developed four strategies for gauging actors' influence (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; Geary, 1992; Pfeffer, 1992). First, scholars suggest gauging influence by assessing the degree to which actors' policy *goals* align with the policy's *outcome* (Pfeffer, 1992). In short, this method aims to determine who "won" and who "lost" in the policymaking game. For example, let us say that actor A seeks policy outcome A and actor B seeks policy outcome B. If the policy process resulted in outcome A, this strategy would suggest that actor A exerted influence.

A second strategy for gauging actors' influence relies on actors' *reputation*. This strategy involves assessing actors' perceptions of other actors' power and influence (Pfeffer, 1992). Building on the prior example, analysts using this method might gauge influence by asking both actors A and B who, in their view, had what power to influence the policy process, and who took advantage of their power to do so.

A third strategy involves assessing the types and amounts of *resources* actors have at their disposal to influence the policy process (Pfeffer, 1992). This strategy, which Pfeffer (1992) refers to as a representational measure of power, focuses on actors' power arsenals, rather than whether they deployed the resources within those arsenals. Consequently, this strategy reveals actors' *potential* to exert influence. Using this method, analysts would explore the resources (e.g., money, materials, access to information) that actors A and B had access to throughout the policy process.

The final strategy for gauging actors' influence, grounded in Bachrach and Baratz's (1970) concept of *nondecision-making*, leads analysts to search for instances where actors have kept other actors out of the policymaking arena or suppressed issues from making it onto policymakers' agendas (Geary, 1992). For instance, this strategy may reveal to analysts that

actors A and B held private, rather than public, meetings throughout the policy process in an attempt to prevent actor C from influencing the policy outcome.

Each of the aforementioned strategies for gauging influence reveals one component of the complex influence equation but may overlook other critical components. For instance, analysts using the reputational method may have trouble getting any information—let alone accurate information—from actors about who influenced the policy process. When used together, though, these strategies offer analysts a strong basis for assessing who influenced whom, over what, and to what end (Pfeffer, 1992).

Policy Phases

The aforementioned sections describe how three sets of political factors interact to influence policymaking processes: 1) *contextual factors*, such as the social structure and values of a society; *systemic factors*, such as political systems' procedures and values; and *actor-level factors*, such as actors' policy goals and their sources of power to advance them. Existing models of policymaking in political science, public policy, and education policy suggest that interactions among these political factors take place in different segments of the policy process (Bardach, 1977; Kingdon, 2003; Malen, 2006; Mazzoni, 1991; Sabatier & Weible, 2014). Yet, those models tend to either view policymaking as a rational and linear process, ignoring the contextual and political realities of policymaking, or focus on one segment of the policy process rather than the process as a whole. The conceptual model for this study draws on the strengths of these existing models to offer a heuristic that helps analysts to examine how contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics shape a policy as it moves from idea to implementation. The model divides the policy process into three phases: 1) *initiation*, during which actors identify policy problems and begin considering how to address them; 2) *enactment*, during which actors

decide to enact one policy solution among many alternatives; and 3) *implementation*, during which actors put the enacted policy into effect. Existing models suggest that each phase is associated with unique activities and influence efforts, which are described in the following sections. Yet, given the messy nature of policymaking, a policy's journey through these phases need not be linear.

Initiation Phase

The initiation phase of policymaking involves identifying and defining policy problems, getting them on policymakers' agendas, and proposing potential solutions for them (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991; Brewer, 1974; Cohen et al., 1972; Easton, 1965; Kingdon, 2003; Lasswell, 1956). Although the context generates an overwhelming number of demands that systems may consider addressing, these demands only become policy problems "when we come to believe we should do something to change them" (Kingdon, 2003; p. 198). As previously described, some demands are more likely to become policy problems—that is, to make it into the political system and onto policymakers' agendas—than others. For instance, policymakers may be more responsive to demands that align with the values of the system and the actors who operate it (Easton, 1965; Kingdon, 2003). Actors may engage in influence efforts to translate their demands into policy problems that make their way onto policymakers' agendas by lobbying policymakers or those who have access to them, framing their demands in ways that appeal to policymakers and broader publics (Stone, 1989), or "shopping" (p. 1050) for policy arenas that are more favorable to them and the issues with which they are concerned (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991).

At the same time policy problems are developing, so too are potential solutions to them (Cohen et al., 1972; Kingdon, 2003). Building on Cohen and colleagues' (1972) "garbage can model" of organizational choice, Kingdon (2003) argues that policy problems and potential

solutions, or policy alternatives, flow concurrently down separate “streams.” In other words, while actors are advocating for policymakers to address certain problems, actors are also proposing policies they believe could address those problems. Alongside the problem and policy streams flows the political stream, which may include changes in the public’s opinion on an issue, interest groups’ advocacy for particular policy changes, and newly elected officials entering their arenas with new policy agendas. When the problem, policy, and political streams merge, they create a “policy window,” or “an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems” (Kingdon, 2003; p. 165). These windows may open when new policy problems emerge or when changes in the political stream favor existing problems or potential solutions to them. For example, new leadership in an organization may provide opportunities for employees to push forth policy changes that prior leadership did not favor. When policy windows open and problems make it on to policymakers’ agendas, the policy enactment phase begins.

Enactment Phase

The enactment phase of the policy process is, in short, the decision-making phase. This phase involves policymakers choosing one policy to adopt among many alternatives (Brewer, 1974; Howlett et al., 2015; Kingdon, 2003; Lasswell, 1956). When deciding among these alternatives, policymakers may consider their feasibility (e.g., budgetary constraints), alignment with community members’ values, and likelihood of being supported by the community and other political actors (Kingdon, 2003). Actors may use a variety of the political strategies previously described to influence policymakers’ decisions about which policy to enact, including but not limited to persuasion, inducement, and constraint (Dahl, 1984; Gamson, 1968; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950).

Implementation Phase

After policymakers have enacted a policy, implementation begins. Implementation involves putting an enacted policy into effect (Bardach, 1977; Brewer, 1974; Lasswell, 1956). Bardach (1977) describes implementation as “a process of assembling the elements required to produce a particular programmatic outcome” (p. 57). This phase is often associated with a unique cast of characters and slate of influence efforts. While higher-level bureaucrats are responsible for enacting policies, lower-level bureaucrats are highly involved in policy implementation (Bardach, 1977). In education, for instance, district officials and board of education members often enact policies while principals, teachers, and other school-based actors are left to implement them.

Bardach (1977) describes the politics of implementation as a “system of games” (p. 55). These “games” may include delaying the policy, diverting resources from essential elements of a policy, or deflecting from or attempting to renegotiate the enacted policy's goals. Actors whom the policy is intended to affect may also engage in massive resistance, a strategy that attempts to overwhelm political systems so the policy fails. Policymakers may attempt to combat massive resistance by *prescribing* implementation strategies, *enabling* lower-level bureaucrats to implement policies by providing them with additional supports, *incentivizing* actors to accept the policy, or *detering* them from resisting it by instituting a penalty structure for noncompliers. Scholars have also explored implementation games in education, in particular (Honig, 2009; Malen, 2006; Marsh, 2012). For example, Malen (2006) describes four categories of implementation politics: 1) policy dilution, which includes influence efforts that minimize a policy's impact or undermine it completely; 2) policy appropriation, which refers to actors' efforts to “selectively and strategically” (p. 98) implement policies in ways that advance their

own interests; 3) policy nullification, which involves attempts to revoke enacted policies through legislation, litigation, or mass resistance; and 4) policy amplification, which involves developing political structures and alliances that support the implementation of a policy.

In addition to political games, implementation may be hindered by administrative limitations and structural constraints (Bardach, 1977; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). For example, the lower-level bureaucrats often responsible for implementing policies may be hindered by the daily time and energy demands of their jobs (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). Additionally, implementation within complex institutions, like school districts and schools, may be hindered by the lack of coordination across different organizational units. Implementations of policies that span multiple settings (e.g., multiple schools) may also be limited by variations in the social system, which make it difficult to standardize implementation procedures (Bardach, 1977).

Policy Prospects

The contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics that occur throughout the three phases of the policy process shape policies' prospects for fulfilling their aims. Allison and Zelikow (1999) suggest that policies are "political resultants" (p. 294), rather than "results," because they stem from "compromise, conflict, and confusion of officials with diverse interests and unequal influence" and "the activity from which decisions and actions emerge is best characterized as bargaining along regularized channels among individual members of the government" (p. 295). For example, policy alternatives proposed in the initiation phase may be watered down by enactment politics, and further diluted by implementation games.

While political models typically only include policy outcomes at the end of the policy process (e.g., Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Easton, 1965; Malen, 2006), the conceptual model for this study includes policy prospects, or interim outcomes, during initiation, enactment, and

implementation phases. Each phase may have multiple prospects. For instance, each policy alternative proposed during the initiation phase may be associated with a different potential outcome. Given the persistent and powerful nature of political dynamics, a policy's prospects are also likely to change over time. Incorporating prospects into a political model provides scholars with an analytic structure to capture snapshots of the ongoing effects of influence efforts, in addition to their cumulative effects on policy outcomes.

Policy Outcomes and Feedback

While a policy has several prospects for fulfilling its aims throughout the policy process, after implementation, it generates outcomes. Easton (1965) distinguishes between policy prospects, which he refers to as outputs, and policy outcomes by suggesting that “an output is the stone tossed into the pond and its first splash; the outcomes are the ever widening and vanishing pattern of concentric ripples” (p. 352). A policy’s outcomes may relate to its aims but may extend beyond them as well. For example, the outcomes of a state policy intended to expand healthcare access may include changes (or stasis) in the percentage of residents who have access to healthcare. But they may also include changes in residents’ political views related to social policy and the distribution of political power in the state. Regardless of whether the policy increases access to healthcare, if residents believe that the state government is not responsible for providing healthcare, they may vote out the governor whose administration advanced the policy.

Outcomes re-enter the policy context and may feed back into the political system as inputs, generating future policy changes (Easton, 1965). Baumgartner and Jones (2002) suggest that feedback may be positive, amplifying the likelihood and scope of future policy changes, or negative, maintaining stability in the system rather than promoting further changes. Returning to

the healthcare policy example, voting out the governor whose administration advanced the policy may amplify policy changes, such as rescinding the policy or advancing a new one.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented this study's conceptual framework, which is a political model grounded in classic traditions of political systems, power, and influence; scholars' adaptations of those traditions; and literature on the role of race and racism in policymaking. The model suggests that contextual, systemic, and actor-level political factors interact throughout the policy process. Contextual and systemic political factors shape contours of the policymaking process; in short, they determine what policy issues political systems prioritize, how political systems make policies, and who has the power to influence them. Actor-level factors operate within the boundaries of contextual and systemic factors, and include policy actors' power, political skill and will, and the strategies they use to advance their goals. Altogether, these three sets of factors affect who is able to influence policymaking and how they do so. In this study, I use four strategies to gauge actors' influence: 1) assessing the alignment between actors' policy goals and policy outcomes; 2) assessing actors' perceptions of whether and how other actors influenced the process; 3) assessing actors' sources of power to influence the policy process; and 4) assessing whether certain actors were excluded from the process. I use these strategies to gauge influence in the initiation phase of the policy process, where policies are introduced; the enactment phase, where policies are voted into effect; and the implementation phase, where policies are put into practice.

Chapter 3: A Review of Literature on the Politics and Prospects of School Desegregation

This chapter reviews literature on the politics and prospects of advancing school desegregation policies. In line with my conceptual framework, this chapter explains how contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics have shaped the aims and outcomes of desegregation policies. I begin with a discussion of the contextual factors—including residential and school segregation, federal support for and constraints on desegregation, and a diversifying student population—that have shaped desegregation efforts from the late 1800s through the Supreme Court’s *Parents Involved in Community Schools* (2007) case. Given that these factors have largely left desegregation in the hands of school districts, I then examine how systemic factors, including districts’ structure, procedures, values, and norms, have affected their prospects for desegregating. Finally, I discuss how the policy actors who operate and are served by school districts—district policymakers and community members—have attempted to influence, and have often eroded, districts’ prospects for desegregating schools in the 21st century. I close by discussing how these political factors have converged to shape policy outcomes related to both school segregation rates and distributions of political power within districts.

Desegregating Schools in a Segregated, Unequal, and Diversifying Context

Residential and school segregation and inequality are perhaps the most salient contextual factors that have shaped whether, when, and how school districts attempt to desegregate. For decades, most children have lived in neighborhoods and attended schools with children of the same race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status and had differential access to resources and opportunities. In 2015, over three-quarters of children lived in neighborhoods where their racial/ethnic group was overrepresented. White children were the most isolated from peers of

other races/ethnicities: the average White child lived in a neighborhood that was 78% White (Owens, 2020). And high levels of neighborhood segregation have tended to overlap with segregation between districts and between schools within districts. Around the same time period, Black and Latinx students were concentrated in some districts while White and Asian students were concentrated in others (Fuller et al., 2022; Owens, 2020; Richards et al., 2020).

Additionally, most students attended schools where the majority of peers were their same race/ethnicity. This trend was particularly strong for White students and Latinx students, who attended schools that were 69% White and 55% Latinx, respectively. Furthermore, Black and Latinx students were concentrated in schools where more than two-thirds of their peers were Black and/or Latinx while White and Asian students were concentrated in schools where roughly one-third or less of their peers were Black and/or Latinx. Racial/ethnic school segregation was particularly high in suburban districts, where Black and Latinx students attended schools that were roughly 75% students of Color and White students attended schools where roughly two-thirds White (Frankenberg et al., 2019).

Given the relationship between race/ethnicity and income level (Shrider et al., 2021), neighborhoods, districts, and schools that are segregated by race/ethnicity also tend to be segregated by socioeconomic status. From 1990 to 2010, between-district income segregation increased by more than 15%, and from 1991 to 2012, between-school income segregation in large districts increased by more than 40% (Owens et al., 2016). Black and Latinx children are generally concentrated in low-income neighborhoods, districts, and schools at higher rates than White and Asian children. For instance, in 2015, Black and Latinx children tended to live in neighborhoods where income was 25-30% lower and poverty rates were twice as high relative to

White and Asian children. Black and Latinx students also attended low-income schools at much higher rates than their White and Asian peers (Owens, 2020).

The racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation between neighborhoods, districts, and schools has perpetuated a profoundly unequal society. Residential and school segregation fosters resource and opportunity gaps between predominantly White and/or Asian districts and schools and predominantly Black and/or Latinx districts and schools (Carter & Welner, 2013). For example, predominantly White districts receive greater per-pupil expenditures than predominantly Black and/or Latinx districts (Baker et al., 2020; Weathers & Sosina, 2022). These gaps foster disparities in students' achievement and educational attainment (Card & Rothstein, 2007; Condrón et al., 2013; Johnson, 2019; Mayer, 2002; Mickelson, 2001; Reardon & Owens, 2014). Several studies suggest that different degrees of exposure to low-income peers are the key mechanism through which racial/ethnic segregation produces educational disparities (Bischoff & Reardon, 2014; Reardon, 2016; Reardon et al., 2019; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). For example, a recent study by Reardon and colleagues (2019) indicates that achievement gaps between White and Asian students and Black and Latinx students are driven by school poverty. The authors suggest that resource disparities between high- and lower-poverty schools are the primary source of these achievement gaps.

The following sections describe the three primary factors that have created and perpetuated patterns of segregation and inequality in the U.S. and, consequently, shaped the political process and prospects of desegregation efforts: 1) segregative housing practices; 2) the judiciary's role in advancing and constraining desegregation; and 3) increasing racial/ethnic diversity in the school-aged population.

Segregated Neighborhoods, Segregated Schools

Discriminatory housing policies and practices have embedded segregation in the fabric of society. In his seminal book *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein (2017) describes a plethora of racist housing policies and practices that segregated America, including restrictive covenants, which forbade homeowners from selling their homes to anyone who was not White; redlining, a discriminatory lending practice that denied many Black people loans to purchase homes or refinance their mortgages; and blockbusting, a real estate practice that encouraged White residents to sell their homes once Black residents moved into their neighborhood. These practices were sponsored by federal and local governments and exploited by real estate agents. Over time, they built neighborhoods that were segregated by both race/ethnicity and income.

Given that neighborhood boundaries tend to dictate students' school assignments, these segregative housing policies and practices contributed to school segregation. Yet, more recent scholarship has suggested that segregative *educational* policies and practices were also to blame. Several studies describe how local government and school officials created and maintained segregated schools through housing and educational policies in the mid-1900s (Benjamin, 2012; Erickson, 2016; Erickson, 2012; Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Highsmith & Erickson, 2015). For example, in Flint, Michigan, local officials collaborated with homebuilders and federal mortgage underwriters to keep Black residents on one side of the city and White residents on the other. When they could not prevent Black families from moving into White neighborhoods, officials gerrymandered attendance zones, built temporary schools, and manipulated student transfer rules to maintain segregated schools (Highsmith & Erickson, 2015). Local leaders in Raleigh, North Carolina, used similar tactics to segregate their schools. Although Raleigh was relatively desegregated in the early 1900s, racial covenants limited Black residents' ability to move into White middle-class neighborhoods. Furthermore, the city located

schools strategically so that Black families, who had been forced to live on the southeastern side of the city, could not send their children to schools in predominantly White neighborhoods (Benjamin, 2012).

A recent study by Ansley Erickson and Andrew Highsmith (2018) suggests that city officials' desire to create racially/ethnically homogeneous schools drove them to implement segregative housing policies and practices. One of the most salient city-planning concepts of the early- to mid-20th century was the “neighborhood unit,” which sought to design neighborhoods that were safe, beautiful, efficient, cohesive, and family-friendly. Schools were literally at the center of these units, and they were also a central part of them; not only were schools seen as spaces to educate children, they were envisioned as community centers where children and adults could gather to participate in activities with their neighbors. To improve neighborhood cohesion, these spaces were often conceived of as racially/ethnically and economically homogenous—a vision that motivated discriminatory housing practices in many cities and contributed to the creation of segregated neighborhoods and schools.

Schools also drive families' decisions about where to live. For example, as suburban schools in Hartford, Connecticut, gained the reputation of being high-quality, they attracted families from the city who were willing to and could pay more for housing in those districts. Simultaneously, real estate companies worked with school officials to improve schools' reputations, so that agents could market higher-priced homes as located in desirable school districts. Agents steered middle-class Black buyers to one district and employed blockbusting tactics that eventually transformed the once diverse suburb into a segregated Black district (Dougherty, 2012). Similarly, in Nashville, Tennessee, developers and school officials worked together to create segregated suburban spaces. For instance, the county planning commission

worked with the school board to locate schools in segregated residential areas. Developers then marketed those schools to White families, who flocked to them for their reputation of educational quality and racial/ethnic and socioeconomic homogeneity (Erickson, 2016; Erickson, 2012).

The *overtly* discriminatory housing practices that segregated American neighborhoods and schools have generally died out, though they persist in more *covert* forms and have never been fully remedied (Rothstein, 2017). For example, a recent study of four Texas counties found that subsidized housing developments are zoned to racially/ethnically and socioeconomically segregated schools (Holme et al., 2020). Furthermore, the neighborhood unit lives on, maintaining school boundaries that reflect segregated neighborhoods and, in turn, maintain segregated schools (Green et al., 2017; Monarrez et al., 2021; Saporito, 2017b; Saporito & Van Riper, 2016). White families also continue to sort into predominantly White affluent or middle-class districts, which allows them to monopolize high-quality schools and the opportunities they offer (Bischoff, 2008; Dougherty, 2012; Turner et al., 2021; E. Wilson, 2021). In short, the legacies of segregative housing practices endure.

Desegregation and the Courts

Communities of Color across the U.S. have fought against segregated neighborhoods and schools—and for educational equality—for centuries. While their fights for equality have taken many forms, one of the most popular strategies in the 20th century was litigation. Many, though not all, communities of Color viewed school desegregation as a means to achieve equality, and courts as the most promising avenue to pursue it. Although many Black schools served as symbols of Black self-determination and employed qualified, caring, and supportive Black teachers who held high expectations for Black students, states and local districts did not provide

them with the same quality of facilities and resources they afforded White schools (Dingus, 2006; Horsford, 2009; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; V. Morris & C. Morris, 2002). Similarly, districts across the western and southwestern U.S. maintained segregated, unequal schools for Mexican American children under the guise of efficiency; many districts claimed that, because Mexican American children were not proficient in English (when, in fact, many were), it was more efficient to teach them in a separate school from White children (who were assumed to be English-proficient) (Donato et al., 2017).

In response, Black, Mexican American, and other people of Color across the country sued districts that operated separate school systems for students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, maintained segregated schools within diverse districts, and allocated resources inequitably across segregated systems and schools (Ladson-Billings, 2004; San Miguel Jr. & Valencia, 1998; S. Wilson, 2003). The courts served as intermediaries between local communities and school districts by arbitrating these demands for equal educational opportunities. This set of policy actors played an active role in desegregation through the early 2000s, and the legacy of their role continues to shape the politics and prospects of desegregation today. Supreme Court decisions in the mid-20th century initiated desegregation in many districts, but from the mid-1970s onward, the Court has largely constrained districts' capacity to desegregate.

A Path to Equality?: Demands for Desegregation through the 1950s

Desegregation is often conceived of as a “Black and White” issue—that is, one that Black people fought for and White people resisted, and one that the Supreme Court altruistically ensured with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954. But the legal history of desegregation is much more complex. Although Black parents, educators, and communities were certainly on the front lines of fights for equality through school desegregation, some of the

earliest desegregation cases involved Chinese American, Indigenous, and Mexican American families.

In 1885—just a few years after the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited immigration from China and prevented Chinese Americans from becoming U.S. citizens—Joseph Tape, a successful Chinese American businessman who was well-regarded in the White community, and his wife Mary Tape sued the San Francisco Board of Education and their local school’s principal for refusing to admit their daughter to an all-White public school. The California Supreme Court ruled in favor of the family and their daughter, Mamie Tape, in *Tape v. Hurley* (1885). Despite the fact that the school continued to deny Mamie admittance, and that the state passed a bill the same year that established separate schools for Chinese American children, Chinese American children increasingly attended all-White schools in San Francisco after the case. In 1913, an Indigenous family in Klamath County, Oregon, sued their local school board for refusing to admit their daughters, Naoma and Juanita Crawford, to an all-White school. As in *Tape v. Hurley*, the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs—but they only did so because the Crawford girls were of mixed White and Indigenous heritage, because their parents were not members of an Indigenous tribe and “conform[ed] to the customs and habits of civilization,” and because the state of Oregon had not yet enacted laws establishing separate schools for racially/ethnically minoritized children (*Crawford v. School District No. 7*, 1913).

One year later, Francisco Maestas, a Mexican American railroad worker in Alamosa, Colorado, sued the local district for requiring his son, as well as other Mexican American children, to attend a "Mexican School" that was under-resourced and further from their home than an all-White school in the district. The district maintained that the segregated schools were nondiscriminatory, since they were segregated on the basis of English proficiency rather than

race/ethnicity. However, the court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs for two primary reasons: first, as a result of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, they had U.S. citizenship and were legally classified as White; and second, because many Mexican American parents demonstrated that their children were, indeed, proficient in English. The judge continued to allow the district to operate a separate school for children who they determined—in no systematic way—were not English-proficient (Donato et al., 2017).

These cases and others, including *Piper v. Big Pine School District of Inyo County* (1923), *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), and *Alvarez v. Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* (1931) (Alvarez, 1986), ostensibly advanced school desegregation in several states. Yet, the courts often left room for states to enact legislation that would enforce segregated schools for White children and children of Color, and they allowed segregation on the basis of language to persist for Mexican American and other Latinx children. Furthermore, in many of these cases, plaintiffs' demonstration of proximity to Whiteness—including legal White status, English proficiency, and assimilation to White customs—was an integral part of their arguments. In other words, racially/ethnically minoritized children were expected to give up at least some parts of their culture to attend the well-resourced, close-to-home schools to which White children had access.

Desegregation efforts in Black communities in the early 1900s were less successful, largely due to the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896, which established the constitutionality of "separate but equal" treatment for Black and White people, and its *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* decision in 1899, which allowed racially separate schools to persist. Still, in 1909, Black activists created the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and made one of their first goals ensuring that Black

students had the same educational opportunities and resources that White students had. After years of preparation and advocacy, the NAACP had some success with Supreme Court rulings that desegregated higher education institutions, including *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1948) and *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950). But the courts continued to resist desegregating K-12 schools. For example, in *Briggs v. Elliott* (1950), a South Carolina court ordered the district to make Black and White schools more equal, rather than desegregate them.

The NAACP's legal strategy came to fruition with *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954. In *Brown*, the Topeka, Kansas, chapter of the NAACP challenged the district's policy to operate separate schools for Black and White children, and while they were unsuccessful at the trial court level, they appealed. Their appeal directly challenged the *Plessy v. Ferguson* precedent, set in 1896, which claimed that separate, segregated institutions were constitutional so long as they were equal. When the Supreme Court heard the appeal, they combined *Brown* with similar cases from South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. In a rare unanimous decision, the Court found that school segregation on the basis of race denied Black children the equal protection of laws granted by the 14th Amendment. In the opinion, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote that, although the segregated Black and White schools in question were mostly equal—in terms of “tangible factors” like facilities, curricula, and teacher quality—segregation generated “a feeling of inferiority” for Black children that had detrimental effects on their motivation and development. One year later in *Brown II* (1955), the Court sought to establish guidance for districts whose segregated school systems had been deemed unconstitutional by *Brown I* (1954). Chief Justice Warren argued that, because the separate cases comprising *Brown I* “arose under different local conditions,” they required local remedies. Consequently, *Brown II* gave districts the responsibility to desegregate their schools

and gave lower courts the power to ensure that districts engaged in “good faith” efforts to desegregate at “all deliberate speed.”

Ostensibly, *Brown I* and *II* were evidence that the country—or at least the Court—had finally recognized its responsibility to redress racial inequality. Yet, many scholars have pointed out that the decisions were more symbolic than substantive (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Rosenberg, 2004). For example, both Derrick Bell Jr. (1980) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2004) have argued that *Brown I* was a prime example of interest convergence. Racial segregation had begun to threaten America’s reputation as an equal opportunity, meritocratic nation where anyone could achieve the “American dream”—an image that was key in the country’s maintenance of international power and legitimacy. Furthermore, segregation had become a barrier to economic success in the South. The convergence of White interests in the national reputation and economic growth and Black interests in racial equality is what made *Brown* politically feasible (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

The *Brown* cases also did little to ensure that districts provided equal educational opportunities to all students, regardless of their racial identities. First, the legal arguments used in *Brown I* painted segregation as a problem of individual actors’ prejudices, rather than a racist system. Consequently, the precedent it set limited courts to remedying acts of intentional discrimination, like operating separate school systems for students from different racial groups, and (at least at first) ignored the more pervasive resource and opportunity inequities that stem from racist systems, which operate apart from actors’ intentions (Guinier, 2004).

Second, the guidance that *Brown II* provided to lower courts was vague and lacked urgency, making it difficult for them to enforce desegregation and easy for districts evade it (Patterson, 2001; Ryan, 2007). At the same time, many states passed laws that made it nearly

impossible for districts to desegregate schools, or at the very least disincentivized it. For example, Virginia legislators amended their state constitution to allow White students to use public funds, in the form of vouchers, to transfer out of desegregated public schools and into all-White private schools, and created a pupil assignment task force that prevented state funding from going to desegregated public schools so they would be forced to close (Ryan, 2010). And in Atlanta, districts began investing in Black schools in hopes that Black parents and students would not request admittance to White schools, which could have required them to desegregate (Patterson, 2001).

In addition, White residents in states across the country—even in those states where governors supported desegregation—tried to undermine desegregation efforts themselves by participating in mass protests, fleeing to all-White private schools, and engaging in violence and intimidation tactics against Black students and families (McRae, 2018; Patterson, 2001; Pride & Woodard, 1985). White women played an especially significant role in preventing desegregation post-*Brown* (McRae, 2018; Nickerson, 2014). Across the country, but particularly in Southern states, these actors attempted to prevent desegregation by framing it as a communist policy that threatened family values, their ability to be good mothers, and the safety of White children. White women also tried to garner support for anti-desegregation coalitions by involving White students in their efforts. For instance, in 1959, the Citizens' Council Education Fund of Mississippi sponsored an essay contest for high school students to write about the importance of segregation (McRae, 2018).

At the same time, Mexican American families across the southwest and west continued their own fight for equal educational opportunities. Because of their racial classification as White, Mexican Americans and other Latinx people were not protected under *Brown*: those cases

only granted protection to minoritized groups who had been forced to attend schools separate from White students on the basis of race. In a handful of court cases in the 1940s and 1950s, including *Westminster School District v. Mendez* (1947), *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District et al.* (1948), and *Herminio Hernandez v. Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District* (1957), Mexican American plaintiffs established Mexican American children's rights to attend segregated White schools on the basis that their children were also White. But although the courts ruled in the plaintiffs' favor, they continued to permit segregation on the basis of English proficiency (San Miguel Jr. & Valencia, 1998; S. Wilson, 2003). In sum, although *Brown* outlawed racially separate school systems, it was not strong enough on its own to abolish—or even substantially reduce—racial/ethnic segregation (G. Orfield, 2001).

Progressive Desegregation through the Early 1970s

The federal government, including the judiciary, played a more active role in advancing desegregation in the 1960s. The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 gave the federal government authority to withhold funds from segregated school systems, which promoted desegregation in places like Chicago (Danns, 2018; G. Orfield, 2001; Patterson, 2001). Notably, the Court's decisions in cases including *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968) required school districts to implement desegregation plans that would *realistically* and *immediately* address segregation, and granted district courts the power to assess and supervise their progress on those plans. *Green* (1968) also established a set of criteria by which courts could measure the success of desegregation plan(s), including the desegregation of faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities, and facilities.

A few years later, Mexican American activists shifted their legal strategy, abandoning the “legally White” argument seeking equal protection under *Brown* (Donato & Hanson, 2012). In

Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District (ISD) (1970), Mexican American plaintiffs argued that the Corpus Christi Independent School District had operated a segregated and unequal school system that disenfranchised both Mexican American and Black students. The district court in Texas ruled that, because the Corpus Christi ISD operated a *de jure* segregated system, Mexican American and other Latinx students were an “identifiable, ethnic-minority group” and thus entitled to protection under *Brown*. In doing so, the case marked some progress toward educational equality.

This progress continued with the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), which established that districts could use busing as a metropolitan desegregation strategy (G. Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Ryan, 2007). The ruling essentially gave districts the power they needed to overcome residential segregation. Prior desegregation efforts in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district had largely failed, because most schools in Charlotte were predominantly Black and most schools in the surrounding areas were predominantly White. *Swann* (1971) required the district to take their desegregation efforts a step further by busing students further distances to create more racially diverse schools. Notably, the busing plan approved by the federal district court judge—named the “Finger Plan,” after the expert witness who proposed it—required additional busing for *Black children*, specifically. As described later in this chapter, putting the onus of desegregation on children of Color was a common strategy to appease White families—most of whom opposed desegregation.

Amidst this apparent progress toward desegregated schools, Chinese American parents in San Francisco were fighting a different battle. A San Francisco court had ordered the district to desegregate, and the district had submitted a desegregation plan that involved reassigning Chinese American students from schools that were almost all Chinese American to schools that

would be more racially/ethnically diverse. In many ways, the case—*Guey Heung Lee v. Johnson* (1971)—reflected what was happening around the country: district courts were ordering school boards to remedy decades of state-sponsored segregation by implementing comprehensive desegregation plans. But many Chinese American parents in San Francisco valued their segregated schools, which they argued provided their children with a culturally responsive education that would be lost in diverse public schools. The Supreme Court eventually upheld the lower court’s decision to move forward with the desegregation plan, but the case foreshadowed future opposition to desegregation by racially/ethnically minoritized groups—sometimes in the name of educational equality—discussed later in this chapter.

Green, Cisneros, Swann, and other similar cases of the time required districts to remedy *de jure* segregation—meaning segregation that they had intentionally created with policy—but did little to address apparent cases of *de facto* segregation—which was not easily traceable to district policy but often was the result of district or other government practices, like discriminatory housing policies (Patterson, 2001; Ryan, 2007). *Keyes v. School District No. 1* (1973) was the first Supreme Court case to undermine the notion of *de facto* segregation and to require districts to take concrete steps to remedy school segregation, whatever its causes. The case involved a district in Denver, Colorado, that served a racially/ethnically diverse student population: at the time, roughly 66% of students were White, 20% were Latinx, and 14% were Black. Plaintiffs wanted the district to desegregate schools in the Park Hill neighborhood in northeast Denver because Black and Latinx students were concentrated in some schools and White students were concentrated in others. *Keyes* was different from other cases at the time because the district involved had never operated a *de jure* segregated school system that forced Black and/or Latinx and White students to attend separate schools. However, the plaintiffs

argued that the district had intentionally segregated schools in Park Hill by using a neighborhood-based school assignment policy, gerrymandering attendance zones, and strategically placing schools to concentrate Black and Latinx students in some schools and White students in others. The district court that heard the case first ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, finding that the district had deliberately segregated schools through so-called “race-neutral” policies and ordering it to desegregate Park Hill schools. Arguing that the board’s *de jure* segregation tactics had extended to other schools in the district, the plaintiffs pressed the court to expand their desegregation order beyond Park Hill. But the district court claimed that just because the school board had engaged in *de jure* segregation practices in Park Hill did not necessarily mean it had engaged in those practices in other parts of the district. In other words, segregation in the rest of the district may have been *de facto*, existing apart from segregative intent, and not subject to court-ordered desegregation. The court maintained its order to desegregate Park Hill schools, but did not order the district to desegregate the rest of its schools.

The case made it to the Supreme Court after an appellate court held that the board was responsible for remedying *de jure* segregation in Park Hill but not responsible for remedying segregation in the rest of the district, because the plaintiffs did not demonstrate that the board had intentionally segregated schools beyond Park Hill. The Supreme Court agreed with the lower courts that the district had intentionally segregated Park Hill schools, but took a slightly different stance on segregation in the rest of the district. Unlike the lower courts, the Supreme Court held that *de jure* segregation in one part of a district—Park Hill, in this instance—*was* compelling evidence that the rest of a district *was de jure* segregated. In some ways, this decision was a “win” for desegregation because it put the onus on districts to demonstrate that their practices were *not* segregative, rather than on plaintiffs to demonstrate that districts’ practices *were*

segregative. However, the Court's majority limited the scope of required desegregation remedies to actions taken with "purpose or intent to segregate," which became increasingly difficult to prove as districts moved away from operating racially/ethnically separate school systems and towards less obvious segregative practices (E. Wilson, 2021). Justice William Douglas warned of the dangers of distinguishing between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation in his separate opinion:

I think it is time to state that there is no constitutional difference between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation, for each is the product of state actions or policies. ... Where the school district is racially mixed and the races are segregated in separate schools, where black teachers are assigned almost exclusively to black schools, where the school board closed existing schools located in fringe areas and built new schools in black areas and in distant white areas, where the school board continued the "neighborhood" school policy at the elementary level, these actions constitute state action. They are of a kind quite distinct from the classical *de jure* type of school segregation. Yet calling them *de facto* is a misnomer, as they are only more subtle types of state action that create or maintain a wholly or partially segregated school system.

In sum, *Keyes* absolved districts of the responsibility to remedy the school segregation that decades of overtly racist housing and education policies left in their wake. Yet, it was also the first case to implicate segregated Northern and Western districts, and marked another point in the judiciary's slow but steady progress toward mandating desegregated schools.

While the judiciary worked to advance desegregation through the early 1970s, the communities being forced to desegregate largely resisted it. Most districts only desegregated when the courts ordered them to do so, and continued to subvert these orders because board members themselves or White people in their districts vehemently opposed desegregation. Local

policymakers and White parents used a variety of tactics to resist desegregation. For example, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the district feigned desegregation through a process known as “intact busing,” in which entire classes of Black students bused into formerly all-White schools, which kept those students segregated from their White peers (Delmont, 2016). Across the country, White parents formed anti-desegregation coalitions, engaged in violence directed at Black students, desegregated schools, and others who supported them, and framed their resistance to align with popular American ideals (Delmont, 2016; Erickson, 2016; Failer et al., 1993; Formisano, 2004; Lassiter, 2006; Ryan, 2010; Todd-Breland, 2018; Willie & Greenblatt, 1981). For instance, they argued that busing violated their individual liberties and was an “intrusion into cherished realms of family authority and property rights” (Erickson, 2016; p. 148). Arguments like this one framed resistance to desegregation as both race-neutral and legitimate, which meant that districts were more likely to factor them into their policy decisions (Danns, 2007). Additionally, many studies suggest that White families attempted to undermine desegregation efforts during their implementation by fleeing desegregated districts for predominantly White ones (Clotfelter, 2004; Fairlie & Resch, 2002; Logan et al., 2008; Nevin & Bills, 1976; Rossell & Armor, 1996; Wells & Crain, 1997; McPherson, 2011; Rossell, 1990; Rossell & Armor, 1996).

Despite some policymakers’ and parents’ best efforts to undermine or circumvent desegregation efforts, federal support ultimately helped to desegregate schools, particularly for Black students in the South (Clotfelter, 2004; Farley & Frey, 1994; G. Orfield, 2001; G. Orfield et al., 2014; Reardon & Owens, 2014). Court orders, in general, were associated with lower levels of racial/ethnic segregation (Fiel, 2015; Reardon et al., 2012), and several studies suggest that districts found a variety of policy strategies to effectively desegregate schools. For example,

regional desegregation strategies were among the most effective at reducing segregation because they merged predominantly Black and/or Latinx urban districts and predominantly White suburban districts, which not only improved districts' diversity overall, but also created geographically larger districts that White families were less likely (and able) to flee (Erickson, 2016; Grant, 2011; Holme et al., 2016; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). Several studies also suggest that voluntary policies (e.g., magnet schools, student transfer policies), which families had the choice to opt into, were more successful at reducing school segregation than regulatory policies (e.g., busing) because they were more palatable to White families and thus less likely to spur White flight to predominantly White suburban or private schools than regulatory policies (McPherson, 2011; Rossell, 1990; Rossell & Armor, 1996). At the same time, evidence suggests that voluntary policies allowed segregation to persist in many districts because they did not require White parents to enroll their children in more diverse schools—and many White parents were not willing to enroll their children in those schools unless forced to do so (Baum, 2010; Danns, 2018; McPherson, 2011; Orfield & Eaton, 1996).

The increased, albeit uneven, trend toward desegregation was associated with a variety of positive educational outcomes for students of all races/ethnicities. For example, several studies documented increases in the educational and occupational attainment of Black students who attended desegregated schools (Ashenfelter et al., 2005; Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012; Wells & Crain, 1994). Furthermore, a large-scale qualitative study of high school graduates from various racial/ethnic backgrounds who attended desegregated schools in the 1970s found that attending those schools left graduates feeling prepared to participate in a diverse society, more comfortable in interracial settings, and more understanding of people from other backgrounds (Holme et al., 2005; Wells et al., 2008; Wells et al., 2005).

But amidst these educational and social improvements, educational inequities persisted. White resistance to desegregation led many districts to advance policies that heavily burdened students and families of Color. For example, when districts—particularly those in the South—were ordered to desegregate, many decided to close Black schools and send Black students to formerly all-White schools (McPherson, 2011; Pride & Woodard, 1985; Wells et al., 2005). In doing so, they disrupted Black communities, fired Black teachers and administrators, and stripped Black students of the supportive, culturally responsive educational environments that Black teachers and administrators had worked so hard to create (Caruthers et al., 2021; Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Dougherty, 2020; Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Irvine & Irvine, 1983; J. Morris, 2008; Tillman, 2004). Black students were also bused at rates disproportionate to their White peers, in part because districts often feared that busing White children would promote White flight (Horsford, 2010; Serbulo, 2019). Students of Color also continued to experience racism within desegregated schools. For instance, most desegregated schools gave more weight to the needs and interests of White students, families, and neighborhoods (Erickson, 2016). Moreover, Black and Latinx students often had less access to resources, challenging curricula, and high-level classes than their White peers did, and faced racial/ethnic discrimination and disproportionate discipline and special education assignments (Horsford, 2010; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Mickelson, 2001; Wells et al., 2004). Ultimately, the shortcomings and inequitable implementation of desegregation plans led some Black communities to resist desegregation (Dougherty, 2020; Todd-Breland, 2018). For example, after failed desegregation attempts, many Black residents in Chicago pursued community control over their children’s schools (Todd-Breland, 2018). This evidence reveals that in many ways,

desegregation policies compounded or created inequities at the same time they claimed to address them.

From Federal Support to Federal Constraints

After *Keyes*, the political winds that had offered at least some federal support for desegregation changed course. During his presidency, which spanned from 1969 to 1974, Richard Nixon had appointed four conservative Supreme Court justices who were less keen on federal involvement in desegregation than prior justices had been. The Nixon administration also weakened the Department of Justice's ability to withhold funds from segregated districts—a tool that had aided in advancing desegregation (Danns, 2018; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Patterson, 2001). The “save the cities, spare the suburbs” (Ryan, 2010; p. 5) approach to education policy that Nixon espoused, which prioritized compensatory resources and funding for predominantly Black and/or Latinx schools rather than desegregation, came to a head with *Milliken v. Bradley* in 1974.

The Court's ruling in *Milliken* drastically undermined districts' ability to meaningfully desegregate schools by limiting the constitutionality of inter-district desegregation plans, including urban-suburban mergers that had advanced desegregation in many metropolitan areas (Erickson, 2016; Grant, 2011; Holme et al., 2016; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). The case arrived to the Supreme Court after district and appellate courts had established that the Detroit Public School System (DPSS), a predominantly Black district, could not realistically desegregate without involving the surrounding predominantly White suburban districts. *Milliken* was a particularly salient case because came at a time when other districts, especially in Midwestern and Northeastern metropolitan areas, were facing similar barriers to DPSS (James, 1989). Although the lower courts had ordered DPSS and 53 outlying suburban districts to implement a cross-

district desegregation plan, the Supreme Court overturned their ruling. The Court's majority acknowledged the need for desegregation in DPSS but, building on its distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation in *Keyes*, did not order a metropolitan desegregation plan because the surrounding suburban districts had not *intentionally* implemented segregative policies. The remaining four justices, including civil rights champion Thurgood Marshall, sided with the district court and argued that a cross-district desegregation plan was constitutional, feasible, and the only realistic way to desegregate DPSS.

In short, *Milliken* represented the Court's shift to a narrower view of districts' roles in remedying segregation—one that viewed discriminatory housing policies as a problem that districts were not responsible for addressing. The impacts of *Milliken* were clear. Through 1990, inter-district segregation increased (Clotfelter, 2004; Logan et al., 2008) and Black, Latinx, and White students increasingly attended schools with peers of their same race/ethnicity (G. Orfield, 2001). During that time, many districts remained under court orders to desegregate, but that changed when a series of Supreme Court cases in the early 1990s made it easier for districts to escape those orders. The first in this series was *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1990), which limited district courts' power to oversee and evaluate school boards' desegregation plans. In doing so, the Court shifted power from the district courts that were marshalling desegregation to the school districts that were, in many cases, trying to evade it (Parkman, 1996).

Second, the Court established in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City Public Schools v. Dowell* (1991) that district courts must dissolve desegregation orders if districts had exhibited “good faith” in complying with the orders and had eliminated the “vestiges of past *de jure* segregation ... to the extent practicable.” The case arose when the Oklahoma City Public Schools (OCPS) adopted a student assignment plan that would clearly result in segregation.

OCPS had operated under a court order for several years but, in 1977, was granted “unitary” status, which meant that it had, in the eyes of the district court, achieved a “nonracial” school system (*Green*, 1968). An appellate court ruled that, because the proposed assignment plan would segregate schools, it violated OCPS’ desegregation decree even amidst the district’s unitary status. But the Supreme Court overturned the ruling, citing the importance of returning power to school districts. In the opinion announcement, Chief Justice William Rehnquist stated: “a school desegregation decree is not intended to operate forever, for federal supervision of local systems always has been intended as a temporary measure to remedy past discrimination.” In short, the ruling was another sign that the Court had begun to prioritize local control over desegregation.

Freeman v. Pitts (1992) was the nail in the coffin of federal oversight. The Court ruled that districts could achieve unitary status even if they had not fully desegregated. The DeKalb County School System (DCSS) in Georgia had filed for unitary status, despite growing segregation for Black students in the district, and despite the appellate court’s finding that DCSS had not achieved unitary status, the Supreme Court ruled that the remaining segregation in DCSS was the result of demographic changes rather than *de jure* segregation tactics and, consequently, that the district had fulfilled its court order (Amsterdam, 2017). Once again, the Court’s ruling made it easier for districts to shirk desegregation mandates.

Through *Missouri*, *Dowell*, and *Freeman*, the Supreme Court sent a message that the federal government should “get out of the business of school desegregation and return school districts to local control” (Ryan, 2007; p. 141-142). These rulings made it easier for opponents of desegregation to challenge court orders even when districts wanted to continue them, and even when they were voluntary. Furthermore, unless districts had a “compelling” educational goal that

could *only* be met with desegregation, the courts could order them to end their race-conscious assignment policies (G. Orfield, 2001). For example, in the mid-1990s, Chinese American parents in San Francisco challenged the district’s racial/ethnic quota assignment policy—which had been implemented as a part of its desegregation order—after their children had been rejected from top schools because those schools were “capped out” for Chinese American students. The parents who filed the class action lawsuit—*Ho by Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District* (1997)—argued that the policy discriminated against Asian American students to the benefit of White students. Although the plaintiffs themselves were not opposed to affirmative action policies that considered race/ethnicity in student assignments, anti-affirmative action groups took up their case. In 1999, the plaintiffs reached a settlement with the district, which agreed to replace the racial/ethnic quota system with one where race/ethnicity was not the primary or sole factor determining admission (*Ho by Ho v. San Francisco Unified School District*, 1997; Kim, 2001; Quinn, 2020). Similar challenges to desegregation policies happened across the country through the 1990s and early 2000s, and in some cases, these challenges led districts to adopt segregative assignment policies (Diem, 2017; G. Orfield & Eaton, 1996). The rollback of court orders contributed to growing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, particularly in the South and in districts where segregation levels had been low when orders were in place (G. Orfield et al., 2014; Reardon et al., 2012; Reardon & Yun, 2003).

The *Ho* case was, in many ways, prophetic because it foreshadowed the Supreme Court’s momentous decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007). *Parents Involved* spawned from a lesser-known challenge to desegregation, made by Black parents in Louisville. Louisville—now part of the Jefferson County Public Schools—had received a court order to desegregate in 1975, and had implemented a variety of strategies,

including busing and magnet schools, to do so. As in many other parts of the country—particularly in the South—Black people in Louisville bore the burden of desegregation: Black teachers were disproportionately fired, Black schools were disproportionately closed, and Black students were disproportionately bused. Central High School, a historically Black school located in a predominantly Black community in the heart of Louisville, was one of several converted into a magnet school. It provided students with opportunities to prepare for careers in law and medicine, and was highly sought after—especially by Black families who lived nearby. But because it used racial/ethnic quotas as a component of its desegregation plan, Central limited the number of slots available to Black students. Black parents—frustrated by the fact that their children were bused from Central to lower performing schools, where they had fewer opportunities and experienced more racism—filed a lawsuit against the district in hopes of ending its desegregation order. Most of the plaintiffs were not opposed to desegregation, but were fed up with its unfulfilled promises of educational equality and wanted more control over their children’s educational opportunities—something that White parents in the district already had. After a long legal battle, the district court ruled in favor of the parents. The decision granted the school district unitary status, and ordered that Black students who had previously been denied by Central be granted admission. However, the judge left the rest of the desegregation plan intact because diversity in schools remained a worthy, and constitutional, goal (Garland, 2013). The Central case left an opening for White parents to challenge their children’s school assignments, too. Although the district had abandoned racial/ethnic quotas for several magnet schools, it left them intact for traditional schools. Several White parents whose children had been denied transfer to their desired traditional schools filed another lawsuit against the district, this time asking them to abandon the entire desegregation plan. But the district judge who had ruled

in favor of the Central plaintiffs ruled in favor of the district, and the plan held on (Garland, 2013).

At the same time the plaintiffs' lawyer prepared his appeal, political winds were once again shifting to the Right. A similar case had also arrived at the Supreme Court: White parents in Seattle had challenged the districts' voluntary desegregation plan, and a lower court had upheld it. The Supreme Court heard the Louisville and Seattle cases together. On June 28th, 2007, the Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, limiting districts' ability to use race/ethnicity in school assignment decisions and, as a result, severely constraining their capacity to create and maintain diverse schools. More specifically, the Court established that districts could not consider individual students' race/ethnicity in school assignment policies, unless they were still under court orders, which were falling by the wayside in the wake of *Missouri*, *Dowell*, and *Freeman* (Diem & Brooks, 2013; Garland, 2013; G. Orfield et al., 2008; *Parents Involved*, 2007).

Ultimately, the *Parents Involved in Community Schools (PICS)* decision marked another step in the Court's march away from federal oversight of desegregation and towards federal constraints on it. In the Court's majority opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts argued that racially/ethnically balanced schools were not a "compelling" government interest and that "the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race" (*Parents Involved*, 2007). By arguing for a race-neutral approach to policymaking, the opinion ignored the long history of racially/ethnically discriminatory housing and education policies that segregated our society, that institutionalized inequality, and that require race-conscious remedies (Donnor, 2011; Dumas, 2011).

Yet, Justice Anthony Kennedy left the door for desegregation slightly ajar in his concurring opinion. He agreed with the majority that the Seattle and Louisville policies were unconstitutional, but also argued that diversity in schools *is* a compelling government interest—one that could and should be pursued with race-neutral policies or, when it cannot be achieved in any other way, with race-conscious policies. He even noted specific actions that districts could take to foster and maintain diversity in a constitutional manner, including building new schools in areas that would draw diverse student bodies, considering neighborhood demographics when redrawing attendance zones, and targeting recruitment towards specific student groups (*Parents Involved*, 2007; Wells & Frankenberg, 2007).

Despite Justice Kennedy's caveats, the *Parents Involved* ruling has led many districts to abandon desegregation policies altogether or to rely on race-neutral desegregation strategies—like assignments based on socioeconomic status, geography, or test scores—that are less effective at mitigating racial/ethnic segregation (Frankenberg et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2012; McDermott et al., 2015; Reardon & Rhodes, 2013; Reardon et al., 2006). Fewer districts have tried to maintain a race-conscious approach to desegregation by adopting policies that use the racial/ethnic makeup of neighborhoods to assign students to schools. For instance, the Berkeley Unified School District implemented a controlled choice plan that attempts to create schools that reflect the diversity of the district (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg, 2017). The Jefferson County Public Schools have adopted a similar plan. But although these generalized race-conscious policies may be more effective at diversifying schools than race-neutral policies, they are still less effective at reducing segregation than individual race-based policies (Frankenberg, 2017). Several studies suggest that the limits on race-conscious assignment policies have contributed to growing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation

between districts and schools (De Voto & Wronowski, 2018; Owens et al., 2016), but changes in nationwide demographics—described in the next section—have also affected these trends (Fiel, 2013).

As many scholars have suggested, the legal context of desegregation reveals limited possibilities for creating and maintaining racially/ethnically diverse schools (Amsterdam, 2017; Green & Gooden, 2016; G. Orfield, 2001; G. Orfield & Eaton, 1996; G. Orfield et al., 2008; Ryan, 2007; Wells & Frankenberg, 2007). Although the Court played an active role in advancing desegregation in the 1960s and early 1970s, it has since returned power to local school districts. At the same time, it has limited districts' power to implement policies that have viable prospects for desegregating schools. The shadow of *Milliken* (1974) has left many urban, predominantly Black and/or Latinx districts with segregated, under-resourced, and low-performing schools, and little chance to meaningfully desegregate them (Diem, 2015; Holme et al., 2016; Richards et al., 2020). And *Parents Involved* (2007) shut the window of opportunity for desegregation even further by limiting the constitutionality of race-conscious assignment policies.

But this legal context is far from deterministic. Even when the Court was advancing desegregation, many districts and local community members found ways to minimize or completely undermine it (Donnor, 2018; Formisano, 2004; Patterson, 2001; Ryan, 2010). And today, as the Court itself is constraining desegregation, some districts have found ways to advance it, if only modestly (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg, 2017; McDermott et al., 2012). To be sure, “desegregation” in the 21st century constitutes less dramatic changes in schools' demographics than it did in the mid-20th century, given constraints from the Court and increased segregation between districts. But even so, this modest progress is a reminder that the

federal government is but one of many salient factors that shape the politics and prospects of desegregating schools.

Changing Demographics: Opportunity for Desegregation or Threat of Resegregation?

At the same time that segregative housing policies and the federal government have shaped the politics and prospects of desegregation efforts, so too has the increasing diversity of the nation's school-aged children. Since the mid-20th century, America has become an increasingly multiracial society. Between 1970-2016, the population of White students in public schools declined dramatically, from 79% to 48%, while the population of Latinx students increased from 5% to 26%. The population of Asian students has also increased from less than 1% to almost 6%. The population of Black students has remained close to 15% (Frankenberg et al., 2019).

These changing demographics have been magnified in suburban districts. In the 20th century, suburbs were predominantly White and largely isolated from the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of the cities they surrounded. But by 2010, almost one-third of suburban residents were living in districts where between 20 and 60% of residents were people of Color (M. Orfield & Luce, 2013). Furthermore, between 2006 and 2016, White student enrollment in suburban public schools in large metropolitan areas (with populations of 250,000 or more) declined from 57% to 47%, while Latinx enrollment increased from 21% to 27% and Asian enrollment increased slightly from 6% to 7%. Black enrollment declined slightly from 15 to 14%. Enrollment trends were similar in midsize and small metropolitan areas (Frankenberg et al., 2019).

In their book *The Resegregation of Suburban Schools: A Hidden Crisis in American Education* (2012), Erica Frankenberg and Gary Orfield propose a typology of suburbs based on

the different degrees and types of demographic changes they have experienced in recent decades. Exclusive enclaves are high-income, predominantly White suburbs that have experienced minimal demographic change over the last few decades. Countywide districts are geographically large and racially/ethnically diverse districts that are commonplace in the South. Stable, mixed income districts, which are typically situated farther from urban centers, have experienced minimal demographic change and have few racially/ethnically minoritized students, but are diverse in terms of socioeconomic status. Inner-ring, transitioning suburbs are those situated close to cities; they are experiencing rapid racial/ethnic change, including increasing populations of people of Color and decreasing populations of White people. Satellite cities, which are geographically larger than most other suburban districts, are experiencing moderate demographic changes, where Black, Latinx, and low-income populations are growing. Developing immigration meccas are suburbs that are experiencing slow but moderate demographic changes, including increases in percentages of Asian, Latinx, and low-income students.

This study has the potential to provide new insights about the demographic evolution of suburban districts. Howard County is an ideal context to study because it combines many of the categories in Frankenberg and Orfield's typology. In its most basic form, it is a countywide district. But it is also an exclusive enclave, given that it has one of the highest median incomes in the U.S., and an immigration mecca, given that it is increasingly an immigration destination, particularly for Asian people. Furthermore, Columbia—the urban center of Howard County—was designed to foster socioeconomic and racial/ethnic diversity, and continues to provide mixed income housing options today.

Many scholars have suggested that increasing diversity in schools nationwide and in suburban schools, in particular, present opportunities to desegregate (Frankenberg et al., 2019;

Fuller et al., 2022; Lichter, 2013; Logan & Zhang, 2010; M. Orfield & Luce, 2013). Greater diversity in a district could, for example, increase students' exposure to peers of different races/ethnicities (Logan & Zhang, 2010). Some scholars have also argued that gentrification—meaning the influx of White, middle-class families into predominantly Black and Latinx urban areas—could provide segregated districts that had previously been constrained by *Milliken* (1974) with opportunities to desegregate (Diem et al., 2019; Mordechay & Ayscue, 2017; G. Orfield & Ee, 2017). But these scholars have simultaneously warned that increasing diversity could lead to increasing segregation (Frankenberg et al., 2019; Fuller et al., 2022; Lichter, 2013; Logan & Zhang, 2010; M. Orfield & Luce, 2013), and a growing body of evidence supports their concerns. Between 1980 and 2000, growth in Latinx and Asian populations drove increases in segregation for those groups (Iceland, 2004). Furthermore, between 1998 and 2010, Latinx students became more segregated within districts where at least 10% of students were Latinx (Fuller et al., 2022). However, recent research has found that increasing diversity may not be fostering segregation in all districts. A study of segregation trends between 1993 and 2015 found that districts with moderate increases in racial/ethnic diversity were less segregated than districts with very low or very high growth in Black, Latinx, and Asian student populations (Richards et al., 2020). Similarly, recent evidence suggests that gentrification may contribute to reductions in racial/ethnic segregation in some districts (Mordechay & Ayscue, 2020), although it may also create new forms of resource inequities within schools (Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Posey-Maddox, 2014).

Increasing diversity has led to increasing segregation in suburban districts too. Between 1987 and 1995, growing suburban enrollments of Black, Latinx, and Asian students were associated with increased segregation levels (Reardon & Yun, 2001). Evidence from 2016

suggests that these trends have continued: as suburban districts have become more Black and Latinx and less White, they have also become more segregated. For example, Black and Latinx students are often concentrated in schools separate from White and Asian students (Frankenberg et al., 2019). White flight from diversifying districts to exclusive enclaves—high-income, predominantly White suburbs—may be contributing to and compounding the growing racial/ethnic isolation in suburban districts (Parisi et al., 2019).

Still, districts could capitalize on changing demographics to combat school segregation and promote desegregation by adopting or revising desegregation plans, like rezoning attendance boundary lines (Diem, 2015; Diem et al., 2014). Yet, many districts—particularly in suburban areas—have been hesitant to adopt or revise their policies in response to increasing diversity (Frankenberg & G. Orfield, 2012), and many that have done so have implemented race-neutral strategies that tend to compound inequities and prioritize the needs and interests of White students over the needs and interests of students of Color (Diamond & Posey-Maddox, 2020; Turner, 2015; Welton et al., 2015). Increasing diversity may, indeed, present some opportunities to desegregate public schools, but it requires districts to take policy actions that may be unpopular with the communities they serve. As the following sections in this chapter explain, districts and the actors who operate them do not always possess the capacity and will to take those actions.

Desegregation in the Hands of School Systems

Although many political systems have played a role in advancing (and constraining) school desegregation policies—including the judiciary and federal and state governments, as previously described—the political systems primarily responsible for 21st century school desegregation efforts are school districts. The conflicts at the heart of desegregation efforts,

which school districts may regulate through desegregation policies, stem from communities' unequal access to educational resources and opportunities. But while a few districts have responded to inequality by voluntarily advancing desegregation policies (Frankenberg & Chavez, 2009; Orfield & Eaton, 1996), most have instead responded to conflict stemming from *lawsuits* about inequality (McDermott, 1999). For example, journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones (2014) found that in the mid- to late-20th century, at the height of the country's desegregation efforts, roughly 750 school districts across the country were under desegregation orders. Thus, although court orders have faded over time (Fiel & Zhang, 2019; Hannah-Jones, 2014; Reardon et al., 2012), they were the push that most districts needed to advance desegregation plans.

Districts' features, including their structure, procedures, values, and norms, shape their prospects of advancing viable desegregation policies. Few studies illuminate the role of these institutional features in desegregation efforts, but those that do suggest that districts' structures and procedures often constrain (but sometimes support) their capacity to desegregate.

Furthermore, districts that value equity may be more inclined to advance desegregation policies on their own accord—both to regulate conflict over inequality and to retain their legitimacy as progressive institutions.

Structural Constraints on and Supports for Desegregation

School districts are generally structured to align with the boundaries of the towns, cities, municipalities, or counties they serve. Consequently, they vary significantly in size, population, and demographics. For example, many districts in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States are small, fragmented, and racially/ethnically isolated. The small, fragmented nature of these districts makes them particularly conducive to White flight, so predominantly White suburbs tend to surround urban centers with high populations of Black and/or Latinx families

(Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Furthermore, given that *Milliken* (1974) has limited their ability to implement cross-district desegregation plans, fragmented districts have limited strategies available to address the racial/ethnic segregation that White flight and other factors have created (Diem, 2015; Holme & Finnigan, 2013).

In other parts of the country—primarily the South—districts follow county boundaries; thus, they tend to be larger and more racially/ethnically diverse (Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013). Although these districts may face segregation between schools and neighborhoods, they are not constrained in their ability to advance viable desegregation policies like their more fragmented counterparts. Indeed, if federal courts had not eased desegregation orders, many of these districts would be obligated to achieve racial balance. Therefore, many scholars have suggested that regional or county-wide districts—like Howard County, Maryland—have the best prospects of desegregating schools (Grant, 2011; G. Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). But while the size and diversity of these districts is an asset, it may also be a constraint: one study suggests that regional districts (i.e., those that include both urban and suburban areas) may have difficulty gaining support for desegregation and other equity-oriented policies from their diverse communities (Finnigan et al., 2014). Another recent study of rezoning efforts in Howard County and Baltimore County, Maryland, found that countywide districts’ capacity to rezone school attendance boundaries for the purposes of desegregation may be limited by county government policies related to school overcrowding and land use. More specifically, the policies that determined school boundaries and governed boundary changes in these counties prioritized school capacity and neighborhood continuity, rather than promoting diversity or combatting segregation (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021).

District Procedures and Desegregation Processes

Some evidence also suggests that districts' procedures shape their capacity and will to desegregate, although this area is understudied. A few studies indicate that school board election procedures influence districts' decisions regarding desegregation. For example, one suggests that ward-based board elections may lead board members to pursue narrow interests aligned with powerful wealthy and White constituents, which deter them from advancing redistributive policies like desegregation (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013). Another study provides a different perspective on board election procedures: Holme and colleagues (2014) found that shifting from at-large board elections to ward-based elections may actually limit the influence of White elites in districts, since the board would be more representative of the district. Relatedly, evidence suggests that school board and superintendent turnover may make it difficult to sustain desegregation policies over time, since incumbents who are advocates for desegregation are often replaced by individuals who pursue other policy agendas (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013).

A handful of studies also suggest that district budgets may constrain their capacity to advance desegregation policies. Some suggest that budgets are especially constraining for districts who use magnet schools as strategies for desegregation, given that these schools require much investment to maintain specialized programs that attract families from across the district (Smrekar & Honey, 2015). Financial constraints may also prompt districts to advance policies that have the potential to promote desegregation, including consolidating or closing schools and redrawing school attendance zones (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017; Tefera et al., 2010). However, these strategies are not guaranteed to promote desegregation, let alone equity. For example, districts may choose, and have often chosen, to close schools in predominantly Black neighborhoods rather than those in predominantly White neighborhoods. These decisions not only place the burden of desegregation on Black students and communities, but also strip them of

institutions that have long served as symbols of self-determination (Dougherty, 2020; Ewing, 2018).

District Values and Norms

In addition to districts' structure and procedures, the values and norms that districts—and the actors who operate them—espouse and uphold shape their capacity and willingness to advance desegregation policies. These factors also shape actors' potential to influence desegregation policy process. Literature suggests that two institutional values and norms play a significant role in desegregation efforts: localism and equity.

The Limits of Localism

Scholars have often discussed localism, which refers to the tradition of local communities' control over educational decision making, as an impediment to desegregation and equality. Although localism *can* foster educational equality, given that local communities may be more attuned to their children's needs than more centralized actors like state and federal governments, it has also allowed predominantly White and wealthy communities to hoard opportunities and resources from predominantly Black, Latinx, and low-income communities (Brennan, 2018; McDermott, 1999; Rury, 2020; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018). Ultimately, the logic of localism has often served as a guise for racism and classism that aims to justify the (re)segregation of schools. In several cases, described in greater detail later in this chapter, White and wealthy communities have used localism as a strategy to legitimize their decisions to secede from racially/ethnically diverse districts (Brennan, 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018).

The tradition of localism also guides districts' norms of community engagement, which may constrain or support desegregation (McDermott, 1999; Scribner, 2016). These norms provide avenues for community members to participate in desegregation policy processes, for

example, by participating in work sessions or public hearings. Some evidence suggests that these norms may privilege resistance to desegregation (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021). However, other evidence suggests that including stakeholders like community groups in the process of desegregation policy making may increase their political support for those policies (Finnigan et al., 2014).

Support for Desegregation in "Progressive" Districts

Accounts from journalists and scholars suggest that districts in socially progressive cities may be more inclined than other districts to advance desegregation policies voluntarily, and may also be able receive political support for desegregation from community members (Baum, 2010; Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Moser, 2015; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Streit, 1964). One of the first documented voluntary desegregation efforts occurred in Princeton, New Jersey, a politically liberal, progressive, and diverse college town. In the early 1960s, the Princeton Public Schools advanced a desegregation policy, later known as "Princeton Plan," which involved pairing predominantly Black and predominantly White schools (Streit, 1964). In a *New York Times* article covering the desegregation effort, journalist Peggy Streit reported that White residents attributed the plan to "an awakening of the social conscience of the community," which aligned with the district's progressive values. However, Black residents argued that it resulted from an impending state constitutional amendment that would make desegregation mandatory (Streit, 1964). Either way, the majority of the Princeton community appeared to support the plan. As Streit (1964) wrote, it "succeeded in ending school segregation without fuss, without pickets, without demonstrations and without tears" (Streit, 1964).

Similar efforts occurred in other progressive cities throughout the 1960s and 1970s. For example, Berkeley, California—a city known for its liberalism—was one of the first districts to

voluntarily desegregate in 1968 with a two-way busing plan, where White students were bused to schools with high percentages of racially/ethnically minoritized students and racially/ethnically minoritized students were bused to schools with high percentages of White students (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Diem, 2017). The Berkeley school board claimed that they voluntarily desegregated both to address educational inequalities and because the community believed students needed to be prepared to live “democratically and harmoniously” in their racially/ethnically diverse community (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; p. 3). Similarly, Montgomery County, Maryland—a neighbor of Howard County with a “history of progressive ideals and activism” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; p. 208)—enacted a voluntary desegregation plan in the early 1970s. Progressive values also appeared to drive desegregation in Oak Park, Illinois, a community just west of Chicago that prides itself on the “Oak Park Way” of embracing diversity and inclusion (Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; McKenzie, 2000; Orfield, 2012). As residential segregation was overtaking Chicago in the 1960s, Oak Park residents and local government officials developed residential desegregation plans and resisted blockbusting. They took it a step further in the following decade by creating a school desegregation plan that reassigned students and bused them to achieve more racial balance. Although schools in the district have remained relatively diverse, educational inequality persists. Scholar Gary Orfield (2012) suggested in his study of Oak Park schools that some of this inequality may stem from newcomers entering the district for its good schools and high property values, rather than its historical commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Progressive districts may be more willing than others to desegregate because segregation and inequality run counter to their espoused values and could undermine their legitimacy. For example, Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, which, as previously described,

voluntarily desegregated in the 1970s, did so in part to preserve their reputation as a “progressive and moral leader in social policy and education” (Orfield & Eaton, 1996; p. 207). In reality, though, the county’s policy was weak and heavily reliant on choice-based policies that often failed to generate meaningful desegregation (Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Similarly, district officials in Baltimore, Maryland, adopted a desegregation plan shortly after *Brown* (1954) in the name of educational equality, but allowed White residents to easily circumvent it (Baum, 2010). These cases offer support for Ray’s (2019) theoretical concept of decoupling in racialized organizations, which suggests that institutions may enact policies ceremoniously to maintain an equity-oriented reputation while maintaining racial hierarchies.

Powerful and Persistent Community Resistance: Erosive Politics in 21st Century Desegregation Efforts

Earlier sections of this review have outlined the contextual and systemic factors that structure opportunities to desegregate schools. Contextual factors, including persistent patterns of segregation and inequity, legal constraints, and an increasingly diverse school-aged population, have left districts with the authority to initiate and advance desegregation policies but questionable capacity to meaningfully do so. Likewise, systemic factors such as districts’ structure, electoral procedures, and values have both helped and hindered desegregation efforts. Together, these factors have shaped the contours of desegregation policymaking in the aftermath of *PICS* (2007). Yet, as explained in the previous chapter, contextual and systemic factors are only part of the desegregation policymaking story; the actors who work to advance (and, more often, to undermine) post-*PICS* desegregation efforts have played a tremendous role in shaping these policies’ prospects for fulfilling their aims. The following sections review the literature on

these actors' roles in post-*PICS* desegregation efforts, with a focus on their policy goals, power resources, and political strategies to influence desegregation policymaking.

Actors, Policy Goals, and Power

Literature suggests that two primary groups of actors have been involved in post-*PICS* desegregation efforts: policymakers, including school district officials, who tend to initiate and guide desegregation policy processes (Diem, 2017; Diem et al., 2015; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013), and community members, including parents and other local residents who seek to influence policymakers' decisions (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). These actors often vary in their policy goals and their power to advance them. Given their different professional roles, interests, and values, policymakers may disagree on the importance and feasibility of advancing desegregation policies. For instance, because school board members are elected officials, they may be more inclined to respond to community interests. On the other hand, superintendents, who are school system employees, may be more inclined to pursue policy goals aligned with the district's bureaucratic or legal interests. As described later in this section, community and district interests are often at odds (Diem et al., 2015). Despite their potentially different policy goals, policymakers tend to possess similar sources of power. Most notably, these actors' leadership roles grant them the power to initiate and advance policy processes, to write or rewrite existing policies, and to access and control the flow of information (Morgan, 1986).

Although community members' policy goals also vary, many studies suggest that they are often in tension with desegregation (Diem et al., 2014; Finnigan & Holme, 2018; Honey & Smrekar, 2020; Lung-Amam, 2020; Park, 2020; Rice et al., 2017). While prior studies have indicated that parents generally support school diversity (Frankenberg & Jacobsen, 2011), their

support has declined over time (Smrekar & Honey, 2015). Furthermore, studies have indicated that parents value neighborhood schools and local control, which often conflict with desegregation policies (Diem et al., 2014; Finnigan & Holme, 2018; Honey & Smrekar, 2020). For example, one study of Wake and Jefferson County public schools found that parents of various races/ethnicities had preferences for diverse schools, but also preferred schools closer to home—two policy goals that are nearly impossible to reconcile in one assignment policy given the realities of neighborhood segregation (Diem et al., 2014). Another recent study suggests that Black parents may value diverse schooling more than White parents, who were more likely to believe that students learn better with their neighbors and to prefer school assignments close to home (Honey & Smrekar, 2020). Additional studies indicate that parents who are Asian immigrants may prefer suburban schools, which tend to have higher populations of White students, to urban schools because they perceive the former to be higher-quality (Lung-Amam, 2020; Park, 2020; Rice et al., 2017).

Although community members draw power from diverse and evolving sources, the literature described in the following sections suggests that these actors possess three prominent sources of power to influence desegregation policymaking in the post-*PICS* era. First, as local residents, these actors have *electoral power*, or the ability to vote in local elections. Put simply, electoral power allows community members to vote out elected officials (e.g., school board members) whose interests regarding desegregation do not align with their own, and vote in those who share similar policy goals. Second, these actors possess *legal power*, or the capacity to sue districts who violate constitutional protections regarding school desegregation. Notably, these protections now extend in both directions: while districts may not engage in overt acts of racial segregation against students of color, *Milliken* (1974) and *Parents Involved* (2007) have put

inter-district and race-based desegregation policies largely out of bounds. And third, community members—parents, in particular—possess *exit power*, or the power to leave their district for another district or private school. Exit power is particularly salient for White middle-class parents, who often bring political and economic capital to schools (Wells et al., 2004; Wells et al., 2005). As previously described, the threat of exit looms larger in smaller districts and is less salient in larger districts, like Howard County, where the cost of leaving for another school is often higher (Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013).

The following sections explain how policymakers and community members use their power resources to exert influence in the direction of their policy goals throughout the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of desegregation policymaking, and how those influence efforts shape districts’ prospects for advancing viable desegregation policies. While most studies do not discuss these influence efforts as occurring in distinct phases of the policy process, arraying the literature in this way offers insights into how actor-level political dynamics shape desegregation policies’ prospects for redistributing educational resources and opportunities throughout the policy process.

Initiation Politics and Prospects

The initiation phase of desegregation has involved identifying school segregation as a problem and proposing policies that aim to address it. Although few studies distinguish between the political dynamics of initiating and enacting desegregation policies, an analysis of this literature suggests that district policymakers engage in unique influence efforts during the initiation phase to try to generate support for desegregating schools. Yet, their efforts are often in vain. Political resistance from community members—White parents, in particular—begins as

policymakers propose desegregation plans and, as later sections discuss, appears to grow stronger throughout the policy process.

District Policymakers

School district policymakers, including district officials such as the superintendent and the school board, play the “lead role” in the initiation phase, given that these actors possess the formal power to initiate and advance desegregation policies (Diem, 2017; Diem et al., 2015; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013). As in earlier decades, these actors have proposed a variety of desegregation strategies in the post-*PICS* era, including policies that mandate desegregation, such as redistricting or rezoning attendance boundaries, which the Howard County Public School System proposed; and policies that incentivize desegregation, including magnet schools, controlled choice plans, or inter-district choice plans (McPherson, 2011; Ryan, 2010; Siegel-Hawley, 2016). Districts’ structure and historical context plays a significant role in policymakers’ plans. For example, urban districts with high percentages of students of color have often pursued choice plans both to minimize White flight and to draw White families in surrounding suburban areas into urban schools (Diem, 2012).

Several studies suggest that districts may try to improve prospects for desegregation by limiting community members’ involvement in the policymaking process (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Diem, 2017; Diem et al., 2014; Finnigan & Holme, 2018; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). One study of a 2013 desegregation effort in Richmond, Virginia, found that district officials developed a rezoning proposal quietly—relying on a consultant rather than involving the administration, the full board of education, the rezoning committee, or community members writ large—in an attempt to advance the policy quickly and easily. As described in subsequent sections, this strategy upset community members, who thought the

policy process lacked transparency and, consequently, fought against the district's efforts to desegregate (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017).

Other studies highlight instances where policymakers have attempted to “bring more people to the table” (Diem, 2017; p. 57) when proposing desegregation plans (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Diem, 2017; Diem et al., 2014; Finnigan & Holme, 2018; Lareau et al., 2018). For example, Finnigan and Holme (2018) describe how the state legislature in Nebraska tried to form a coalition of local superintendents and representatives to generate support for an inter-district desegregation plan. But despite bringing many actors to the policymaking table, the coalition was not a powerful enough tool to overcome the competing policy goals among those actors, which ultimately undermined key components of the desegregation policy (Finnigan & Holme, 2018). Policymakers have also attempted to garner support for their desegregation plans by involving community members in the initiation phase of the policy process (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Diem, 2017; Lareau et al., 2018). For instance, district officials have invited community members to sit on committees or task forces that offer direct lines of feedback to district officials (Diem, 2017) or hosted public forums where community members have the opportunity to share their perspectives about proposed desegregation plans and the factors policymakers should consider when developing them (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Lareau et al., 2018). Although these efforts have increased community members' support for desegregation plans in some cases (Diem, 2017), the evidence discussed in the following section suggests that they often provide community members with platforms to express their *resistance* to these plans (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Lareau et al., 2018).

Parents and Other Community Members

Community actors' interests, which often conflict with the goals of desegregation policies to change students' schooling assignments, in combination with their power to advance their interests, have often led them to engage in resistance efforts during the initiation of desegregation policies. Although one study suggests that White parents in Berkeley and Cambridge may be initiating desegregation themselves by moving back to predominantly Black and Latinx urban districts in pursuit of diverse schooling (Diem et al., 2019), other studies of community members' involvement in the initiation phase of desegregation policymaking suggest that districts' attempt to garner support for desegregation during this phase may actually undermine their prospects for enacting strong desegregation policies (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). For example, a recent study of two Maryland school districts—one of which was Howard County—found that many community members used public engagement processes to oppose rezoning policies for reasons including keeping neighborhoods together, negative impacts on property values, and longer commute times for students (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021). Another study found that parents participated in public forums months before the district released its proposed redistricting plan to express similar concerns about the policy, including moving students who walk to school to being bused to school, increasing lengths of students' bus rides, and sending students to schools outside of their neighborhoods. In response to this input, the district proposed multiple redistricting plans that attempted to assuage these concerns by minimizing students' commute times and keeping their new school assignments close to home—priorities that undermined the policy's potential to meaningfully desegregate schools (Lareau et al., 2018).

Enactment Politics and Prospects

During the enactment phase, districts attempt to move proposed desegregation plans into enacted policies. Actor-level political dynamics in the enactment phase are largely a continuation of those in the initiation phase: district policymakers attempt to move forward with a policy, and community members resist it. While few studies explore policymakers' influence strategies during enactment, several explore the strategies in which community members—particularly White parents—engage.

District Policymakers

Like in the initiation phase of desegregation policymaking, district policymakers often rely on their formal power to enact policies in the direction of their interests. But given community members' electoral power, these actors may also consider the interests of their constituents when choosing which desegregation policy to enact. The community resistance that begins during the initiation of desegregation policies and continues through their enactment, described in greater detail in the following section, has often led district policymakers to enact desegregation policies that have little potential to combat segregation (Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Holme & Diem, 2015; Holme et al., 2013; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017).

Parents and Other Community Members

The vast majority of research on community members' efforts to influence the enactment of desegregation policies focuses on White parents' resistance to them (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Castro et al., 2022; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Holme et al., 2014; Lacayo, 2016; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). These studies often document White parents' resistance to redistricting policies (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Castro et al., 2022; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Lacayo, 2016; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). For example, the aforementioned

study of a rezoning effort in Richmond found that White families protested the policy by speaking at board meetings and petitioning board members for a return to neighborhood schools, which doubled-down on segregation (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). A more recent analysis of that rezoning effort, which analyzed public comments submitted throughout the enactment phase, found that community members expressed support for diversity and integration, but opposed rezoning because they thought it would disrupt social ties, infringe on their freedom, limit students' abilities to walk to school, and reduce school quality. These reasons, while appearing race-neutral, were grounded in anti-Blackness. For example, many White parents resisted being rezoned to schools with higher proportions of Black students because they assumed those schools were lower quality and that Black students were not as academically strong as White students. White parents held these perceptions even though they were largely unsubstantiated by data the district shared throughout the rezoning process. These actors also tried to combat claims that their resistance was grounded in racism through statements including, “I am for integrated schools ... but I’m not for integration in *this way*” (Castro et al., 2022; p. 7).

Other studies have documented similar efforts by White parents to legitimize their opposition to desegregation by framing it as race-neutral (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Lareau et al., 2018). For example, Lareau and colleagues’ (2018) study, previously mentioned for its analysis of initiation politics, found that during the enactment phase of a redistricting policy process, parents attempted to frame their resistance to desegregation as “objective,” rather than grounded in racism or classism. For example, many parents cited research on child development and conducted their own analyses of how the redistricting plan would affect students’ commutes to support their arguments that moving away from neighborhood schools would negatively impact students’ health. Additionally, parents tried to influence policymakers’ decisions by speaking at

board meetings, protesting, petitioning, emailing school board members (the district received 1,000 emails on the issue some weeks), organizing online discussion boards to organize and build coalitions with other parents who resisted the policy, and sitting together in “color-coded outfits” (p. 14) at board meetings to represent solidarity with their neighbors (Lareau et al., 2018).

Overall, research on White parents’ efforts to resist 21st century desegregation efforts parallels the historical accounts of White resistance to desegregation in the 20th century discussed earlier in this chapter. Ultimately, this evidence suggests that, while White parents’ resistance in this century may not be explicitly violent and may appear to be about more technical features of schools (e.g., proximity), rather than race, these actors’ policy goals—namely, their interests in maintaining segregated schools—have persisted over time.

As previously noted, White parents’ resistance has often led district policymakers to abandon or weaken their proposed desegregation policies (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Castro et al., 2022; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Holme et al., 2014; Lareau et al., 2018; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). For example, policymakers have undermined their own redistricting plans’ potential to desegregate schools by refusing to move White and affluent families to schools with higher percentages of racially/ethnically minoritized and low-income students (Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013) and, in some cases, even building new schools to accommodate White and affluent parents’ resistance, rather than assigning them to existing schools that were under-enrolled and served predominantly low-income students of Color (Holme et al., 2014). Furthermore, policymakers appear to privilege White parents’ resistance over the policy goals of parents of Color (Bartels & Donato, 2009; Castro et al., 2022; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). However,

relatively few studies have explored how parents of Color, including Black, Latinx, and Asian parents, have attempted to influence desegregation efforts in the post-*PICS* era.

Implementation Politics and Prospects

Once district policymakers have enacted desegregation policies, they move to the implementation phase, during which these policies are put into effect. The implementation of a redistricting policy, for instance, may involve students attending their newly assigned schools. The vast majority of studies on the implementation of desegregation policies in the post-*PICS* era focuses on parents and other community members' efforts to circumvent these policies.

District Policymakers

District policymakers such as superintendents, school board members, and other district officials, are virtually absent from the literature on the implementation of post-*PICS* desegregation policies.¹ Studies often focus on policymakers' roles in initiating and enacting desegregation policies or, as described later in this chapter, how the implementation of these policies affects policymakers' power (Diem et al., 2015). Given that studies of policy implementation indicate lower-level bureaucrats are often responsible for implementing policies (Bardach, 1977; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977), it is possible that these actors are missing from the implementation literature because school-level officials are responsible for implementing desegregation policies. In fact, in their review of earlier decades of desegregation literature, Wells and colleagues (2004) suggest that scholars have largely neglected to examine how district-led desegregation policies play out in schools. But while some studies do explore within-school outcomes of desegregation policies (Mele, 2019; Welton, 2013), these studies generally

¹ While a few studies use the term "implementation" to describe the segment of the desegregation policy process they explore, these studies focus on policymakers' efforts to enact a written policy (Diem et al., 2015; Holme & Diem, 2015). Consequently, I discuss findings from these studies in the "Enactment Politics and Prospects" section.

do not focus how (and with what degree of integrity) those policies are implemented.

Consequently, both district- and school-level policymakers' roles in the implementation of desegregation policies appears to be a substantial gap in this otherwise vast body of literature.

Parents and Other Community Members

Parents and other community members capitalize on their legal and exit power to influence the implementation of desegregation policies (McDermott et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2012; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018; Wilson, 2019). Many studies document parents' efforts to undermine desegregation policies during implementation by suing districts over their enactment of those policies (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009; Diem, 2017; McDermott et al., 2012; Quinn, 2020). As noted earlier in this chapter, *Parents Involved* (2007) has bolstered parents' power to legally challenge race-conscious desegregation policies (Diem et al., 2014; McDermott et al., 2015; McDermott et al., 2012). For example, after a Pennsylvania district enacted a reassignment policy in 2009, nine families sued, arguing that the plan unconstitutionally used students' races when determining school assignments (McDermott et al., 2012).

Parents' power to exit desegregating districts is another influence strategy they may exert during implementation. As described earlier in this chapter, White flight plagued desegregation efforts through the 20th century and motivated some districts to enact weaker, choice-based plans (Clotfelter, 2004; McPherson, 2011; Nevin & Bills, 1976; Rossell & Armor, 1996). And while many studies of the effects of desegregation on White flight focus on these earlier efforts, rather than post-*PICS* efforts, Erika Wilson's (2019) recent review of literature on the segregative effects of school choice suggests that many White parents have avoided desegregation by sending their children to predominantly White charter schools. Furthermore, several studies describe how predominantly White and wealthy communities have used localism as an excuse to

secede from districts that are racially/ethnically diverse and/or had been court-ordered to desegregate (Brennan, 2018; Camera, 2017; Frankenberg, 2009; Johnson & King, 2019; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018). Suburban White parents have driven successful secession efforts in dozens of districts in recent years (Camera, 2017), and in doing so, have recreated White enclave districts that, given the constraints of *Milliken* (1974) on cross-district desegregation plans, will likely remain segregated for years to come. Siegel-Hawley and colleagues (2018) studied the recent “disintegration” of the consolidated Memphis-Shelby County, Tennessee, district. After having merged to create a larger, desegregated school system, in 2014, several predominantly White and wealthy suburban municipalities seceded, citing localism as a central rationale for their decision. Their secession once again created fragmented, racially/ethnically and socioeconomically segregated districts (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018). Secession appears to be contributing to growing segregation in other districts too: a recent analysis suggests that Southern counties that have experienced secession since 2000 have seen an increase in segregation between school districts (Taylor et al., 2019).

Takeaways from Actor-Level Political Dynamics in the Post-*PICS* Era

The prior sections have described how district policymakers and community members seek to influence desegregation policymaking throughout the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of the policy process. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the political dynamics occurring during initiation and enactment are not all that unique. Although policymakers appear to more actively attempt to generate support for desegregation policies when initiating them than when enacting them, they encounter similar resistance strategies from White parents (and other community members, to a lesser extent) in both phases. And while the political strategies parents' use to resist desegregation during implementation *are* unique to that phase, they too seek

to undermine policymakers' efforts to desegregate schools. Across all three phases, these resistance efforts chip away at desegregation policies' prospects for fulfilling their aims of redistributing students to better balance racial/ethnic and/or socioeconomic enrollments and, in doing so, redistributing educational opportunities and resources more equitably.

While this story is a familiar one, it also appears incomplete. Few studies of post-*PICS* desegregation efforts have focused on how parents of Color and low-income parents have sought to influence these policies. Centering these actors in future research is critical, particularly given the equity-oriented aims of desegregation policies. Furthermore, few studies have focused on how policymakers at the district *and* school levels seek to generate support for, or mitigate resistance to, their policy goals regarding desegregation, particularly in the enactment and implementation phases of desegregation policymaking. Broadening the scope of desegregation research to include these and other actors could generate new insights about the political dynamics and prospects of advancing these policies.

Policy Outcomes

The actor-level political dynamics of desegregation policymaking in the post-*PICS* era, in combination with the contextual and systemic factors described earlier in this chapter, have led to a variety of policy outcomes. Given that desegregation policies aim to reduce segregation, the most obvious policy outcomes of interest are segregation rates. However, these policies have also affected the distribution of political power in school districts, which may have long-term effects on district policymakers' capacity and willingness to develop and maintain desegregation policies. The following sections describe both the segregation and political outcomes of desegregation policies advanced post-*PICS*.

Segregation Outcomes

Desegregation policies advanced after *Parents Involved* (2007) have had mixed effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation rates. On one hand, studies suggest that redistricting (Carlson et al., 2020; Richards, 2014; Saporito, 2017a; Saporito, 2017b; Saporito & Van Riper, 2016; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2021) and controlled choice plans (Chavez & Frankenberg, 2009) may reduce segregation. For example, a recent study of Wake County, North Carolina's, socioeconomic-based student assignment policy reduced racial/ethnic segregation for students who would have attended schools where the majority of students were racially/ethnically minoritized under a neighborhood-based assignment policy (Carlson et al., 2020). Additionally, several descriptive quantitative studies have found that irregularly-shaped attendance zones, which result from districts' efforts to disrupt patterns of neighborhood segregation, are associated with lower levels of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation than regularly shaped zones (Saporito, 2017a; Saporito, 2017b; Saporito & Van Riper, 2016). Another study suggests that redistricting is associated with reduced racial/ethnic segregation in districts under court orders to desegregate (Richards, 2014). But, as previously noted, reduced segregation between schools does not guarantee that students are experiencing desegregated schooling (Mele, 2019; Welton, 2013). For example, a recent study found that desegregation policies do not increase interactions among students of different racial/ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds within desegregated schools (Mele, 2019).

On the other hand, studies have also found that redistricting (Mawene & Bal, 2020; Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017) and various choice-based desegregation policies (Holme et al., 2013) may perpetuate or exacerbate segregation. For example, Siegel-Hawley's (2013) study of Richmond's redistricting effort, described in previous sections, found that the policy may increase racial/ethnic segregation between schools, particularly if

policymakers are attempting to balance school capacity needs with desegregation goals. Additionally, Mawene and Bal's (2020) study of a redistricting policy implemented in a Wisconsin district in 2008 found that the policy continued to segregate racially/ethnically minoritized students in low-income schools.

Although many studies assessing the segregation outcomes of post-*PICS* desegregation efforts focus solely on the outcomes of policies rather than the process of advancing them, a few studies attempt to link the two. Mawene and Bal's (2020) study found that community members protested school reassignments and pressured district policymakers to send students living in the same neighborhoods to the same schools, which, given the realities of residential segregation, would not reduce school segregation rates. Perhaps unsurprisingly, policymakers ceded to community members' resistance and enacted a weak redistricting policy that perpetuated segregation. Similarly, one of the few mixed methods studies on redistricting, which explored the Richmond school district's 2013 redistricting effort, found that the political dynamics of advancing the policy privileged White parents' resistance and led the school board to enact a policy that increased racial/ethnic segregation (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). These studies provide additional evidence that political dynamics shape the strength of the desegregation plans districts enact and, in turn, determine their prospects for reducing segregation.

Political Outcomes

A handful of studies suggest that advancing desegregation policies may also lead to school board turnover and, interestingly, inject partisanship into subsequent school board elections (Diem et al., 2015; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013; Holme et al., 2014). For example, community members have voted out board members who voted for particular attendance reassignments (Holme et al., 2014) and, in some cases, have even opted to

run for the board themselves (Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013). Furthermore, studies documenting the history of desegregation efforts in Wake County, North Carolina, have found that, over time, community members became increasingly dissatisfied with the district's income-based school assignment policy. In 2009, their dissatisfaction contributed to a heated, partisan school board election where, for the first time, candidates ran on party slates: Republicans, who opposed the assignment policy, won all four open seats (Diem et al., 2015; Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; Grant, 2011). Additionally, a few studies suggest that the heated, racialized political battles that often if not always accompany desegregation efforts may actually generate grassroots support for desegregation policies (McDermott et al., 2015; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017). For example, Siegel-Hawley and colleagues' (2017) study of Richmond's redistricting policy found that, although the board enacted a policy that increased segregation, it inspired a small group of community members to organize a coalition to advance educational equity.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on the politics and prospects of school desegregation policies, beginning with racially/ethnically minoritized groups' advocacy for desegregation in the late 19th century and ending with the erosive political dynamics of desegregation in the 21st century. In accordance with the conceptual framework for this study, I organized the literature into contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics. Contextual political factors include residential and school segregation, federal support for and constraints on desegregation, and a diversifying school-aged population. While existing segregation and increasing federal constraints on desegregation tend to undermine school districts' capacity to reduce segregation between schools, an increasingly diverse student population has presented some opportunities for districts to do so. Although few studies explore the role of systemic political factors—including

districts' size and subsequent diversity, electoral procedures, budgets, and values—in desegregation efforts, those that do suggest that these factors have the potential to both make desegregation more difficult for districts *and* inspire them to do so. Most relevant for this study is evidence that districts in communities that espouse progressive values, like Howard County, have been more inclined than others to desegregate voluntarily. Studies of actor-level political factors, from the late 19th to 21st centuries, have been less hopeful about opportunities to desegregate schools. For the most part, these studies suggest that White parents vehemently resist desegregation policies using a variety of political strategies, and that district policymakers often cede to their resistance by enacting weak desegregation policies that have less potential to desegregate schools or abandoning their efforts altogether. Overall, while this literature points to some windows of opportunity for desegregation, it generally suggests that political factors have eroded districts' prospects for desegregating schools.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology for this study and the rationale that guided it. I begin by discussing why I chose a mixed methods case study design, and then describe the particularities of that design, including how the study establishes validity, reliability, and generalizability. The bulk of the chapter describes the qualitative and quantitative data sources and data collection and analysis strategies I used. I close by explaining how I integrated qualitative and quantitative data.

Research Design Rationale

This study employs both case study and mixed methods designs. The following sections discuss why these designs are both appropriate and useful for studying the politics of desegregation in Howard County, Maryland, and for addressing research questions asked, which focus on the political dynamics of advancing this desegregation policy and the degree to which the policy redistributed students by race/ethnicity and Free and Reduced-Price Meal (FRPM) status.

Why Choose a Case Study Design?

Sharan Merriam (1998) suggests that the purpose of case study is “to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon” (p. 29) being studied. Many who study the politics of desegregation have employed this design (e.g., Diem, 2017; Siegel-Hawley et al., 2018) because it provides researchers with the tools to collect and analyze rich information about a phenomenon and the context in which it occurs. Case study design has several defining features with which my study aligns, including: 1) that the phenomenon of study is “bound” by factors like time and participants involved; 2) that the phenomenon of study is

inseparable from the context in which it has occurred; and 3) that the study requires methodological flexibility (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018).

Merriam (1998) argues that “the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case,” adding that, “if the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (p. 27). Similarly, Yin (2018) contends that “the desired case should be a real-world phenomenon that has some concrete manifestation” (p. 31). Case studies may be bounded in several ways. For instance, they may focus on a particular process or program, or a limited number of relevant participants (Merriam, 1998). The case in this study is a redistricting policy, intended to desegregate schools by race/ethnicity and FRPM status, in Howard County, Maryland, in the 2019-2020 school year. This case is bounded by *process*, *place*, *time*, and *participants*: it is limited to a single *process* (redistricting) that occurred in a specific *place* (Howard County, Maryland) at a particular *time* (between January 2019 and August 2020), with a finite number of *participants* (e.g., school board members, other elected officials, and community members).

The phenomena of focus in case studies are also highly intertwined with the context in which they occur. For example, Merriam (1998) writes that case study is “a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context” (p. 29). The inseparability of phenomenon and context in case study design is perhaps the strongest argument for using this methodology to study HCPSS's 2019-2020 redistricting effort. The context of HCPSS and Howard County more broadly is one of the key factors that motivates this study. While many scholars have conducted case studies of school desegregation and redistricting, this case is unique because, as explained in Chapter 1, Howard County possesses favorable political conditions for desegregation, including a countywide structure,

institutional commitments to equity (Howard County Public School System, 2022a), and, in some parts of the county, housing patterns that have fostered racial/ethnic and socioeconomic integration (Hurley, 2017; Stamp, 2014). A favorable context constitutes this study a “critical case” (Yin, 2018; p. 49) of redistricting, described in greater detail in the following section.

Finally, case studies offer methodological flexibility that lends itself to this study’s mixed methods research questions. Merriam (1998) contends that, “unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis” (p. 28). Rather, “a researcher selects a case study design because of the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked” (Merriam, 1998; p. 41). The flexible nature of case study grants me the ability to use methods that best align with my research question, which in this case include both qualitative *and* quantitative methods. The next section discusses why mixed methods were an appropriate choice for this study.

Why Choose a Mixed Methods Design?

Mixed methods scholars Burke Johnson and Anthony Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p. 17). Similarly, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggest that mixed methods research involves “mixing the datasets” to gain a “better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone” (p. 7). Indeed, mixed methods research capitalizes on the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research approaches while minimizing their weaknesses. For example, while qualitative research directly incorporates participants’ perspectives and accounts for the context in which a study takes place, some scholars argue that qualitative studies have limited generalizability due to small sample sizes. Alternatively, while the scope and scale of

quantitative studies typically allow researchers to identify broad patterns that are more generalizable, they often do not directly include participants' voices or provide a deep understanding of a study's context (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In this study, qualitative data provide a deeper understanding of the contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics of redistricting, while quantitative data provide information about how these dynamics shaped the redistricting policy's potential to reduce segregation in HCPSS. Quantitative data also provide supplementary information about actor-level political factors, including the superintendent's and some board members' policy goals.

Many mixed methods scholars contend that mixed methods research falls within a pragmatic paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Feilzer, 2010). Whereas other paradigms, like positivism or constructivism, generally pin researchers into particular ways of viewing the world and particular methods to employ in their research, pragmatism orients researchers toward "solving practical problems" (p. 8) and using whichever methods allow them to better understand those problems (Feilzer, 2010). I approached this study from a pragmatic perspective, allowing several "problems" related to school desegregation to guide my research questions, methods, and analysis strategies. The first and most practical problem is that political factors often undermine school districts' capacity and will to advance desegregation policies, and further undermine those policies' potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. A secondary problem is that existing research on the politics of desegregation tends to provide rich, in-depth descriptions of desegregation policy processes and the contexts in which they occur, but offers fewer insights into how the political dynamics that characterize these processes—stemming from the context in which the district is situated, the structures and procedures that shape the district's processes and policy actors' power, and the actors who are (or are not) involved in the policy

effort—affect the extent to which desegregation policies fulfill their aims of reducing segregation. Furthermore, studies that measure segregation-related outcomes are often quantitative in nature and fail to account for (a) the context of desegregation policymaking and (b) the political dynamics that play a substantial role in determining what, if any, desegregation policies districts implement. A mixed methods design enables me to gain *both* a deep understanding of how context played a role in this redistricting effort and the political dynamics of advancing this policy, *and* an understanding of the extent to which these dynamics affected the policy’s potential to reduce segregation.

Beyond pragmatism, this study is also informed by a critical paradigm—namely, critical race scholars’ perspectives on desegregation. Given that desegregation *aims* to advance educational equity, one may assume that all desegregation policies *do* advance equity. Yet, many scholars who study desegregation from a critical perspective have found that, in some cases, desegregation policies have reproduced inequities (e.g., Dempsey & Noblit, 1993; Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Morris, 2008). Consequently, some scholars have called for school desegregation researchers to consider critical perspectives in their work, which may include using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a guiding framework and incorporating counternarratives on desegregation from Black and other people of Color (Horsford, 2019). I respond to these calls in two ways. First, I incorporate concepts from CRT and literature on the role of race and racism in policymaking in my conceptual framework. The framework guided my data collection and analysis strategies, and thus offered a structure to gain insights on how race and racism shaped the politics and prospects of redistricting in HCPSS. Furthermore, I integrate these perspectives with concepts from political theory and research on the politics of education, which, as explained in Chapter 2, can offer relevant insights about desegregation policymaking to the district leaders,

elected officials, and others advancing these policies on the ground. Employing a race-conscious framework that has the potential to provide practical insights to policymakers aligns with the goal of CRT to provide solutions for addressing racism and racial inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Second, I attempted to incorporate the perspectives of racially/ethnically minoritized community members and policymakers in this study by explicitly trying to recruit those individuals to participate in interviews. Later sections of this chapter describe my recruitment strategies and interview sample in greater detail.

Research Design

Yin (2018) describes research design as “a logical plan for getting from here to there, where *here* may be defined as the set of questions to be addressed, and *there* is some set of conclusions about these questions” (p. 26). A theoretical framework is an integral aspect of any research design, but particularly for case studies (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) writes that the purpose of a theoretical framework is to develop “a sufficient blueprint for your study” (p. 35) by providing guidance for what data to collect and how to analyze them. My conceptual framework guided my decisions about which research design to use for this study, what qualitative and quantitative data to collect, how to analyze them, and how to integrate them.

This study is a single-case study, meaning that it explores a single process (Yin, 2018), and is motivated by the uniquely favorable political context of Howard County, which makes it a critical case of redistricting. According to Yin (2018), theory and theoretical propositions are central to a critical case. He argues that scholars can use critical cases “to determine whether the [theoretical] propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant” (p. 49). In other words, scholars may select critical cases to “test” (Yin, 2018; p. 49) one or more aspects of a theory. Yin (2018) goes on to say that critical cases “can represent a

significant contribution to knowledge and theory building by confirming, challenging, or extending the theory” (Yin, 2018; p. 49). I argue in Chapter 1 that, given Howard County’s unique context, a case study of this redistricting effort has the potential to reveal new insights about the feasibility of desegregation as a policy reform. Recent desegregation efforts have failed to desegregate schools, in part because political barriers like resistance from White parents and legal constraints have led districts to abandon or weaken their efforts, or to not engage in them at all (e.g., Horsford et al., 2013; Serbulo, 2019). By studying a case of redistricting in a favorable political context, where these barriers are likely to be less salient, we can learn whether, even under relatively favorable conditions, desegregation is a feasible policy goal for districts.

This study employs a qualitative-dominant, convergent parallel mixed methods design (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017), arrayed in Figure 1. The “parallel” component of this design means that I collected qualitative and quantitative data separately and simultaneously. The “qualitative-dominant” component of this design indicates that qualitative data were the primary source of information for this study and quantitative data were the secondary source. And the “convergent” component of this design denotes that I integrated my qualitative and quantitative data in the interpretation phase of my study, after collecting and analyzing qualitative and quantitative data separately.

I used this mixed methods design to address two research questions: 1) *How did political factors influence HCPSS’s attempt to redistrict during the 2019-2020 school year?*; and 2) *To what extent did these factors affected the proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans’ prospects for reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation between HCPSS schools?* Generally, these questions seek to understand how political factors influenced the redistricting policy’s prospects for reducing segregation in HCPSS. Thus, in this study, I am

seeking to better understand the phenomenon of political influence. I used qualitative and quantitative data to capture different aspects of that phenomenon, which Jennifer Greene and colleagues (1989) describe as “complementarity” (p. 258). To address my first research question, I used qualitative data to gain in-depth information about the contextual, systemic, and actor-level political factors that characterized the redistricting process. I also used qualitative data to gauge whether and how particular actors exerted (or did not exert) influence throughout the redistricting process by assessing: a) whether they employed the power sources they had at their disposal to advance their policy goals; b) whether other actors perceived them to have influenced the policy process; and c) whether certain actors or groups of actors were excluded from the policy process (Geary, 1992; Pfeffer, 1981). Additionally, I addressed this research question by integrating qualitative data with quantitative data on key district actors’ (e.g., the HCPSS superintendent, board members) policy goals. As described later in this chapter, these quantitative data included segregation projections associated with various redistricting plans proposed by district actors. For example, if a school board member proposed a plan that would have had no effect on segregation, quantitative data would suggest that this actor may be resistant to redistricting in a way that would reduce segregation.

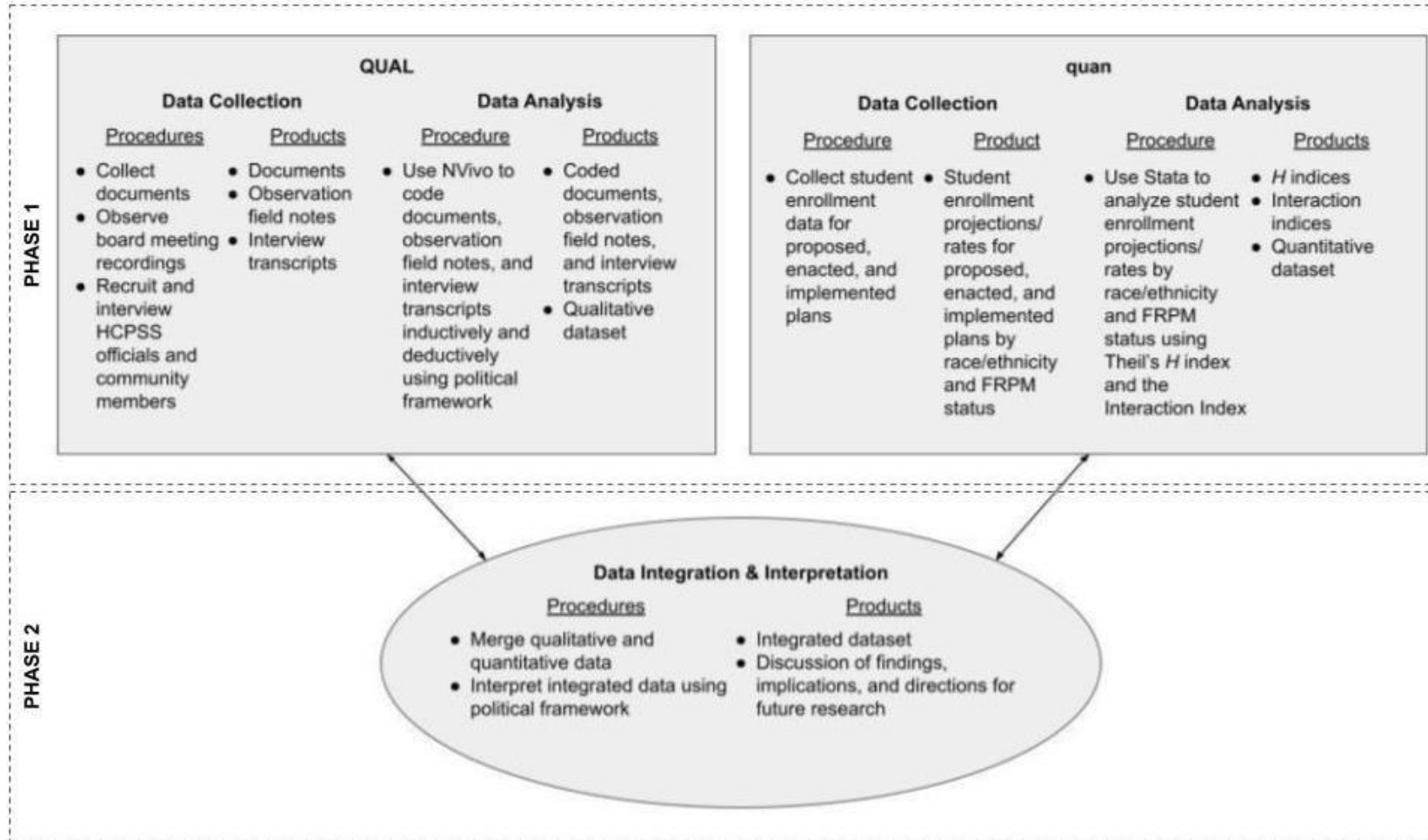
To address my second research question, I integrated qualitative and quantitative data on political factors with additional quantitative data on the proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans’ prospects for reducing segregation. For instance, I compared evidence on the political factors that shaped redistricting during the initiation phase with evidence on whether and to what degree redistricting plans proposed during the initiation phase would have reduced segregation. Together, these data provided information about the extent to which the politics of redistricting shaped the policy’s prospects for fulfilling its aims. I also integrated qualitative and

quantitative data to gauge particular actors' influence over the redistricting policy's prospects for reducing segregation by assessing whether and to what degree actors' policy goals aligned with those prospects (Geary, 1992; Pfeffer, 1981). For example, if evidence suggested that the superintendent wanted to redistrict in a way that would reduce segregation, but the implemented redistricting plan would have increased segregation, one could infer that the superintendent had little influence over the redistricting policy process.

Validity

Merriam (1998) defines internal validity as dealing with “the question of how research findings match reality” (p. 201). Establishing validity in a convergent mixed methods study involves, first, establishing validity in the qualitative and quantitative components of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used several strategies to establish validity for my qualitative findings, including: clarifying my own theoretical orientation, biases, and assumptions at the outset of the study, which I describe in the following section on researcher positionality; using multiple qualitative data sources, which are described later in this chapter, to triangulate, or “confirm the emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998; p. 204); and using the analytic strategy of “explanation building” (Yin, 2018; p. 179), which involves making an “initial but tentative” proposition about my findings, comparing my data against this proposition, revising the initial proposition, comparing additional data against the revised proposition, and repeating this process as needed. To establish validity for my quantitative findings, I used two types of segregation measures, described later in this chapter, that address different dimensions of segregation. I compared the results from these different measures to gain a more holistic and accurate understanding of how different versions of the redistricting plan could have affected, or did affect, racial/ethnic and FRPM segregation in the district. For example, using measures that

Figure 2. *Qualitative-dominant, Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Research Design*



Sources: Adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2007) and DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz (2017).

assessed two dimensions of segregation, rather than one of them, ensured that I did not interpret a particular redistricting plan as reducing segregation along one dimension (e.g., distribution) when it actually increased segregation along another dimension (e.g., exposure). In addition to establishing validity for each set of findings separately, I also established the validity of my integrated qualitative and quantitative findings by clarifying the constructs I was measuring and ensuring that I measured those same constructs with both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, as previously described, both qualitative and quantitative data captured policy actors' goals for the redistricting policy.

Researcher Positionality

One component of validity is researchers' reflexivity, wherein researchers examine how their social identities affect their research and those who participate (or do not participate) in it. Leigh Patel (2016) argues that education research occurs in a social system that privileges some groups while oppressing others. Thus, she contends that it is critical for scholars to reflect on how they and their work are “part of a system that perpetuates inequities through schooling and research about schooling” (Patel, 2016; p. 15).

Studying school desegregation has prompted me to reflect on my identities and how they informed my primary and secondary schooling experiences. As a White woman from a middle-class background, I am, in most ways, in a privileged position in society. My identities have shaped the way I experience the world—and schooling, in particular. I was raised in a predominantly White town and attended elementary, middle, and high schools where almost all of my classmates and all of my teachers were White, and where I had access to plentiful educational opportunities. The lack of racial/ethnic diversity in my town and schools motivated me to attend a university that was located in an urban area and was substantially more

racially/ethnically diverse than the town in which I grew up. Having a diverse group of friends and mentors and professors of Color in college led me to believe that racial/ethnic and other forms of diversity is an asset in education, and that parents and policymakers should strive to ensure that all children and young adults have access to diverse schooling opportunities. Consequently, when I began conceptualizing this study, I viewed school desegregation as a “no brainer” policy (i.e., one that is necessarily positive).

Throughout the research process, I have encountered scholars and literature that have challenged my perspective on desegregation and pushed me to consider other ways of thinking about this issue. Even further, they have pushed me to consider how viewing and conducting research that presents desegregation as a “no brainer” policy fails to acknowledge how desegregation has caused harm in many Black communities and could ultimately reproduce that harm. These experiences led me to read and incorporate into this study theoretical perspectives and literature—namely, those that explore the process and outcomes of desegregation from critical race perspectives—that have complicated my view of desegregation. I view the incorporation of this scholarship in my study as one “check” on my own views of desegregation because it guided how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data. And I consider this “check” to be particularly important because I am a White person studying a policy that has most often affected students of Color—sometimes in negative ways—and that aims to support those students by equalizing educational opportunities.

Despite my reflexivity and my decision to incorporate critical race perspectives in this study, my identities still affected how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted my findings. One of the most significant ways my identities may have affected this study is through interview participants’ perceptions of me, which may have affected their responses to the questions I asked

them during interviews. Annette Lareau (2021) describes how a researcher's identities may position them as "insiders" or "outsiders" on particular issues. As Lareau (2021) describes, being an insider may increase the "quality, legitimacy, and value of a research project" (p. 27) and being an outsider may mean that researchers bring a "fresh perspective" (p. 28) on a topic; yet, she acknowledges that scholars disagree on the advantages and disadvantages of being insiders or outsiders. In this study, my insider/outsider status largely depended on the person I was interviewing. Like me, my participants had multiple identities, so sharing a racial/ethnic identity with a participant, for instance, did not necessarily guarantee that they viewed me as an insider. Thus, I approached data collection with the view that my participants were the experts on this topic, and began interviews by explaining to participants that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions I was asking and that I was simply interested in learning from them. And while I cannot guarantee that my participants were open and honest with me at all times, triangulating evidence from multiple qualitative data sources (e.g., interviews, documents, observations) provided additional assurance that my qualitative findings were valid.

Reliability

A study's reliability is extent to which its findings can be replicated. In other words, a study is reliable if a researcher who conducts a study over again, following the same procedures as the initial researcher, arrives at the same findings and conclusions. Consequently, researchers must "make as many procedures as possible as explicit as possible" (Yin, 2018; p. 46). I used the following strategies, identified by Merriam (1998), to establish this study's reliability: explaining my position, assumptions, and theoretical orientation as a researcher (described in the previous section); clarifying the criteria I used to select data sources; providing a detailed description of my data, including a description of the individuals I interviews; and describing the context of the

site where data were collected. While I described the context of this study in Chapter I, and provide additional information about the study's context in the following chapter, I describe my data sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies later in this chapter.

Generalizability

Generalizability, which may also be referred to as external validity, is “the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (Merriam, 1998; p. 207). This concept is often a tricky one to address in case study research because, as Merriam (1998) explains, a case is selected “precisely *because* the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (p. 208). On this note, Yin (2018) makes a helpful distinction between *statistical* and *analytic* generalizations; it is generally the latter that case studies can offer. Whereas statistical generalizations are inferences about a population based on data collected from a sample of that population, analytic generalizations are opportunities to “shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles” (Yin, 2018; p. 38). This study aims to shed light on theoretical propositions related to the politics of school desegregation by “corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing” these propositions (Yin, 2018; p. 38).

Phase 1: Data Collection and Analysis

The first phase of my research design involved collecting and analyzing my qualitative and quantitative data separately and simultaneously. The following sections describe my qualitative data sources, qualitative data collection and analysis strategies, quantitative data sources, and quantitative data collection and analysis strategies.

Qualitative Data Sources and Methods

This study drew from three sources of qualitative data: documents, observations, and interviews.² I collected these data between March 2021 and December 2022. The following sections describe the three qualitative data sources for this study and the strategies I used to collect them.

Documents

The first source of data for this study was documents related to the 2019-2020 redistricting effort and its outcomes, including news articles related to redistricting from sources like *The Baltimore Sun* and *The New York Times*, press releases from HCPSS, HCPSS’s formal policy on school attendance boundary adjustments, Howard County Board of Education meeting agendas and minutes, written testimony about redistricting submitted by Howard County community members, Howard County Council meeting agendas and minutes, bills related to redistricting introduced by Howard County Council members or Howard County state delegates, and written testimony addressing those bills. I began qualitative data collection by searching for documents relevant to the redistricting process to gain an understanding of the redistricting timeline, procedures, and the actors involved—at least those who were “visible” (Kingdon, 2003; p. 68) in the policy process—before conducting observations, recruiting interview participants, and refining my interview protocol. I started collecting documents by searching Google, local and national news outlets, HCPSS’s website, the Howard County Board of Education’s website, and the Howard County Families for Education Improvement website for documents related to the 2019-2020 redistricting process. I also reviewed documents that were linked to those I found in my initial searches. As I searched for documents, I did a “first-pass” review (Bowen, 2009; p.

² Appendix A provides an overview of qualitative data sources.

32) to identify whether content in the document was credible (e.g., from a credible source, such as HCPSS or a reputable news outlet) and relevant to this study. To determine the credibility of a document, I also considered several questions adapted from Merriam's (1998) suggestions for what a researcher might ask about documents' authenticity, including: *Who created this document?*; *Has it been tampered with or edited?*; and *What was/is the author's relationship to HCPSS and the redistricting effort?* An initial review of documents also pointed to additional sources of documentary data, including the Howard County Council's website and the Maryland General Assembly's website. I analyzed 553 documents in total, after excluding those that were not relevant or credible.

News articles and HCPSS press releases provided information about the timeline of the redistricting process, which began in January 2019 when the school board initiated redistricting and concluded in August 2020 when the district implemented new school attendance boundaries. Given the politically contentious nature of this redistricting process, many news articles also addressed the political dynamics of redistricting, including the conditions that precipitated redistricting (e.g., school overcrowding and segregation), policy actors' interests, and their efforts to influence the school board decision about whether and how to redraw attendance areas. HCPSS's formal policy on school attendance boundary adjustments provided information about the procedures that guided this and other redistricting efforts in the county; this policy also provided information about the formal power that various policy actors (e.g., the superintendent, board members) had throughout the redistricting process.

The majority of documents included in this analysis were from the Howard County Board of Education's website. Board meeting agendas and minutes provided information about the meetings in which the board discussed redistricting and related topics, including overcrowding

and educational inequities—problems that drove the board to initiate redistricting in January 2019. Meeting minutes also provided a synopsis of board members’ votes on redistricting policy matters, which shed light on who supported particular boundary adjustments and who opposed them. School board documents also included information about the proposed redistricting plans and community members’ responses to them. Proposed plans posted on the board’s website included the district’s Feasibility Study, which presented ten redistricting options that focused on addressing overcrowding in certain areas of the county, the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan, board members’ proposed redistricting plans, and the plan that the majority of board members voted to enact in November 2019. Documents addressing community members’ responses to proposed redistricting plans were plentiful. For example, the district disseminated a survey to community members after releasing the Feasibility Study that sought information about which factors they wanted the board to prioritize when redistricting (e.g., alleviating overcrowding, ensuring that students living in the same neighborhood attend the same school, diversifying schools) and allowed community members to submit open-ended responses addressing the ten plans proposed in the Feasibility Study. I analyzed approximately 450 open-ended responses. Sources of community responses to proposed redistricting plans also included written testimony submitted to the board by community members. While I reviewed written testimonies submitted between January 2019 and August 2020, the bulk of testimony about redistricting was submitted between September and November 2019, when the board held public hearings about redistricting and hosted work sessions to discuss potential attendance boundary adjustments. In total, I analyzed approximately 8,200 written testimonies, the vast majority of

which were submitted by parents of HCPSS students or students themselves in opposition to redistricting.³

A preliminary review of news articles, HCPSS documents, and school board documents revealed that two additional political systems were involved in HCPSS's 2019-2020 redistricting effort: 1) the Howard County Council, which was involved in the initiation and enactment phases of redistricting; and 2) the Maryland General Assembly, which was not directly involved in advancing the redistricting policy but introduced several redistricting-related bills after the policy's implementation. Consequently, I also analyzed documents from the county council and state legislature that addressed bills related to redistricting in Howard County and were introduced between January 2019 and August 2020. County council documents included agendas and meeting minutes; bills including CR-112, a resolution introduced in August 2019 that called on HCPSS and the school board to use redistricting as an opportunity to desegregate schools; CR-134, a resolution introduced in October 2019 that requested those selling or renting homes in Howard County to omit references to particular schools in their advertising; and several introduced in spring 2020 related to school capacity and overcrowding—a problem that many policy actors aimed to address by redistricting; and written testimony submitted in response to the aforementioned bills. While only a handful of community members submitted written testimony for the majority of these bills, many submitted testimony in response to CR-112; I analyzed approximately 360 written testimonies for this bill.

Because Howard County state delegates played a more limited role in redistricting than county council members, relatively few documents from the state legislature were relevant to this

³ Not all testimonies were unique. For example, groups of parents from the same neighborhood would often submit testimony with the same or slightly adjusted wording.

study. Relevant documents included a joint statement from Howard County State Senators addressing redistricting; HB-1422, a bill introduced in February 2020 by two Montgomery County delegates, which required Maryland counties and Baltimore City to create community advisory committees that would oversee school redistricting efforts; HB-1511, a bill introduced in February 2020 by the Howard County delegation that required the Howard County Board of Education to submit an report on school capacity to the Maryland General Assembly and to assess the need for redistricting annually; and the handful of written testimonies submitted in response to HB-1422 and HB-1511.

Observations

The second source of qualitative data for this study was observations of recorded school board and county council meetings. I observed recordings of meetings that occurred between January 2019 and August 2020 and where redistricting or related topics (e.g., school overcrowding, educational inequities) were on meeting agendas and/or minutes. I began searching the Howard County Board of Education’s website for relevant meetings to observe in April 2021 and continued identifying and observing relevant meetings through December 2022. I used the school board meeting agendas and minutes I had analyzed to identify meetings between January 2019-August 2020 where policy actors discussed redistricting or related topics. Additionally, because a preliminary review of documents indicated that the Howard County Council played a role in the redistricting process, I also searched the council’s website for relevant meetings, meaning those where redistricting or related topics were on meeting agendas and/or minutes. I observed 46 meetings in total, including 32 school board meetings and 14 county council meetings. Meeting durations ranged from half an hour to eleven hours.

In line with Merriam's (1998) contention that the most important factor determining the focus of observations is "the conceptual framework, the problem, or the questions of interest" (p. 96), my conceptual framework guided my observations of these recorded meetings. I was particularly attentive to discussions of the contextual political factors (e.g., overcrowding, racial/ethnic inequities) that led the board to initiate redistricting and affected actors' power throughout the redistricting process, the systemic political factors (e.g., district policies) that structured the redistricting process and the procedures actors were required to follow, and the actor-level political factors (e.g., interests, power) that led different policy actors to advocate for (or against) different redistricting plans. Additionally, I observed (to the extent possible, given the limitations of observing previously recorded meetings) the following elements to which Merriam (1998) suggests attending: the physical setting of the meeting, the participants, interactions between participants, and conversations amongst participants. When conducting observations, I took field notes of these and other relevant factors, including the time at which particular topics were discussed so I could return to review them if needed.

Observational data provided information about school board and county council members' interests and policy goals with regard to redistricting, the contextual factors that prompted actors to initiate redistricting, and the strategies they used to advance or undermine the redistricting effort. For example, observations of recorded school board meetings provided information about what board members were trying to accomplish with redistricting and how their policy goals aligned or competed with one another. I observed recordings of meetings in which the board voted to initiate redistricting and enact a redistricting plan; meetings in which the board discussed redistricting with other entities, including HCPSS's Office of School Planning; the meeting in which the superintendent presented his recommended redistricting plan

to the board; seven public hearings that the board held for community members to share their perspectives on redistricting after the superintendent presented his recommendation; and nine work sessions that the board held to deliberate potential attendance boundary adjustments. Whereas most of these meetings provided insights about board members' interests and influence strategies and their interactions with the superintendent, the seven public hearings provided insights about community members' interests and policy goals with regard to redistricting.

The county council meetings I observed included meetings that involved just the council and meetings that involved both the council and the school board. Meetings with just councilmembers included those where they introduced and discussed legislation related to redistricting and public hearings where community members testified about that legislation. These meetings provided insights about councilmembers' redistricting-related policy goals and whether the extent to which each member shared those goals. Public hearings also provided insights about community members' perspectives on and policy goals related to redistricting. I also observed nine joint meetings between the council and school board where council and board members discussed the redistricting process, outcomes, and related issues. These meetings provided insights about the relationship between council and board members and whether and to what extent they wanted to accomplish the same things with redistricting.

Interviews

The final source of qualitative data for this study was interviews with individuals who were involved in the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. As Merriam (1998) explains, "interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them" (p. 72). While documentary and observational data provide much information about actors' interests and interactions with one another, they generally do not capture the "back-

door politics” that so often influence decisions, and that are best discovered through conversations with individuals involved in a decision. Interviews are also particularly important sources of information for political analyses because, in the words of Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, “each participant knows one small piece of the story” (1999; p. 312); when put together, these pieces can tell a story more holistically.

I began recruiting interview participants in August 2022, as I was analyzing documents and conducting observations. I used a purposive sampling strategy (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990) to recruit individuals who were involved in the redistricting process. Merriam (1998) suggests that the most salient aspect of purposive sampling is determining “what selection *criteria* are essential in choosing the people or sites to be studied” (p. 61). My criteria for purposive sampling were as follows: individuals must have (a) been involved with the 2019-2020 redistricting effort in Howard County, whether by making decisions about redistricting or trying to influence those decisions in some way, and (b) been at least 18 years or older. These individuals fell into two categories: elected officials who represented Howard County and community members who resided in Howard County. As I conducted interviews, I also engaged in snowball sampling (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990), which is a particular form of purposive sampling, by asking participants to refer me to other participants who fit the aforementioned criteria. Patton (1990) suggests that this strategy can help researchers to identify “cases of interest from people who know people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that is, good examples for study, good interview subjects” (p. 182).

I began recruitment by emailing the four board members who had served in 2019-2020 and were serving on the board in 2022, as well as the county council members who had served in 2019-2020 and were still serving, because their emails were publicly available. Next, I emailed

HCPSS parents who had participated in a pilot study of the redistricting process that I conducted in spring 2021. I then emailed the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) at all 74 HCPSS elementary, middle, and high schools. By emailing PTAs, I aimed to recruit HCPSS parents who had been involved in the redistricting process or who could connect me with other HCPSS parents who had been involved. I also sent recruitment emails to 17 community organizations who were named as engaged in the redistricting process in the documents I analyzed or the observations I conducted, and/or who had representatives serving on Howard County Board of Education committees. I sought to recruit a racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse sample of HCPSS parents by emailing all PTAs, ranging from schools that served predominantly White and high-income students to schools that served predominantly Black and Latinx and low-income students. Additionally, I reached out to community groups that represented various populations, including: Chinese American parents; Hispanic/Latino families; families of children with special education needs; and Black, Muslim, Indian, Jewish, and Korean American community members. Because HCPSS had declined to participate in my study in July 2022, I did not recruit any HCPSS employees to participate in an interview. I sent approximately 120 recruitment emails in total.

My final interview sample (Table 2) included 22 participants: 15 parents of HCPSS students, many of whom were redistricted or proposed to be redistricted in 2019; three members of the Attendance Area Committee (AAC), which the superintendent hand-selected to provide input on his recommended redistricting plan; two elected officials who represented Howard County at the local or state level; and two HCPSS graduates who were students at the time of redistricting. I conducted 21 interviews via Zoom and one interview via phone between September-December 2022. Interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview

protocol (Appendix B) that aligned with concepts from my framework. I asked participants questions related to their role in the redistricting process; their perceptions of and involvement in the political dynamics that occurred throughout the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of redistricting; and their perceptions of how the context of Howard County (e.g., a history of integration in Columbia, increased development, school overcrowding) shaped this policy effort. I also asked participants more specific questions about the redistricting process if I knew (through documents and observations) that they or their neighborhood had been involved in a particular incident. For example, when I spoke with parents from a neighborhood that had been involved in a lawsuit following the board's vote on redistricting, I asked them questions about that lawsuit. Because I was analyzing qualitative and quantitative data as I conducted interviews to identify preliminary patterns, I also occasionally shared these preliminary interpretations with participants and asked for their perspectives on them. For instance, I asked participants if they had observed families leaving HCPSS in 2020 because preliminary quantitative findings suggested an uncharacteristic enrollment decline that year. At the end of each interview, I invited each participant to share my contact information with other elected officials or community members who were involved in the redistricting process, which allowed me to interview participants who (a) I knew from a preliminary review of qualitative data were involved in the process but whose contact information I could not access publicly, and (b) I did not know participated in the redistricting process.

I audio- and video-recorded interviews with the 21 participants who I interviewed via Zoom and took notes on the interview with the one participant with whom I spoke via phone. The phone interview was approximately 20 minutes, while Zoom interviews averaged approximately two hours and ranged from 45 minutes to three hours long. I used Zoom to

generate transcripts for the first three Zoom interviews I conducted and cleaned those transcripts by watching the interview recordings and ensuring that the audio matched the transcript text. For the remaining 18 Zoom interviews, I used GoTranscript, a transcription service, to generate and clean those transcripts.

Overall, interviews sought information about the contextual factors that prompted the board to initiate redistricting; policy actors goals with regard to redistricting; their efforts to influence the redistricting process as the superintendent and board members proposed redistricting plans, as the board enacted its final redistricting plan, and as the final plan was implemented; participants' perceptions of the degree to which the new attendance boundaries fulfilled their aims of desegregating schools and/or reducing overcrowding; and their perceptions of other outcomes of the redistricting process, including its effects on the political context of Howard County. Interviews with HCPSS parents, in particular, provided information about whether and why they supported the various redistricting plans that the superintendent and board members proposed and the strategies they used to advance their policy positions. Parents in my interview sample had a range of policy goals related to redistricting: many supported redistricting to desegregate schools and reduce overcrowding; some opposed redistricting for desegregation but supported redistricting on a smaller scale to combat overcrowding; and others did not have a clear position on the redistricting plans but expressed frustration with the *process* of redistricting. My interview sample seemed to be over-representative of individuals who supported redistricting, given that the vast majority of individuals who submitted written testimonies and/or spoke at public hearings opposed it. However, my interview sample was diverse in terms of the areas of the county parents lived: I spoke with parents from all major

Table 2. Interview Sample Demographics

Role	Region	Race/Ethnicity
Parent	Columbia	Black and White, not Hispanic
Parent	Columbia	White, not Hispanic
Parent	Columbia	White, not Hispanic
Parent	Columbia	White, not Hispanic
Parent	Columbia	N/A
Parent	Columbia	N/A
Parent	Columbia	N/A
Parent	Columbia	N/A
Parent	Columbia	N/A
Parent	Eastern Howard County	Asian, not Hispanic
Parent	Eastern Howard County	Black, not Hispanic
Parent	Eastern Howard County	Black, not Hispanic
Parent	Eastern Howard County	White, not Hispanic
Parent	Eastern Howard County	N/A
Parent	Western Howard County	N/A
HCPSS graduate	Northern Howard County	N/A
HCPSS graduate	Columbia	White, not Hispanic
Attendance Area Committee member	Columbia	Black, not Hispanic
Attendance Area Committee member	Columbia	White, not Hispanic
Attendance Area Committee member	N/A	Black, not Hispanic
Elected official	N/A	N/A
Elected official	N/A	N/A

Note: Some regional and racial/ethnic data are missing because participants were not required to complete a demographic questionnaire to participate in this study. I did not include information for elected officials in an effort to maintain their confidentiality.

areas of the county, including Columbia and the western and eastern parts of the county surrounding it.

Several of the parents I interviewed, as well as the AAC members, had played an active role in HCPSS for several years if not decades: many had led or participated in Parent-Teacher Associations; run for the Board of Education; and advocated to the board and/or county council for policies and programs that would enhance educational equity and/or reduce school overcrowding. This subset of interview participants provided valuable information about the social, political, and economic context of the county and the school system—particularly about how rapid development in certain areas of the county and school district policies contributed to racially/ethnically and socioeconomically segregated and overcrowded (or undercrowded) schools. Additionally, AAC members provided insights into the superintendent’s goals for redistricting, as well as whether and how the committee influenced his recommended redistricting plan. Interviews with elected officials shed additional light on the context of the county and the school system and provided information about the role that political systems beyond the district and school board played in redistricting. Interviews with HCPSS graduates provided insights into school contexts and emphasized disparities in educational resources and experiences between HCPSS schools. These conversations also illuminated students’, rather than parents’, perspectives on the process and outcomes of redistricting.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis began in June 2022 and continued through February 2023. The first step of analysis was coding documents, observation field notes, and interview transcripts in NVivo. I began with deductive coding, using concepts from my conceptual framework, to ensure that my qualitative data connected to the theory and literature in which my study is grounded, and presented a clear path to “talk back” to existing evidence about the politics of desegregation. Prior to coding, I developed a codebook (Appendix C) that defined each code—in alignment

with how my framework explains these concepts—and that I could revisit throughout the process to ensure consistency. Deductive codes included the following: *sociopolitical context*, with subcodes for demographic changes and overcrowding, legal context, and segregation and racism; *inputs*, with subcodes for demands and supports; *political system*, with subcodes for procedures, structures, and values; *initiation phase*; *enactment phase*; *implementation phase*; *policy actors*, with subcodes for interests, political skill, political will, and power resources; *influence efforts*, with subcodes for advocacy and resistance; *prospects*; *outcomes*, with subcodes for political and segregation; *feedback*; and *other*, which I used to capture data that did not fit with another code but seemed relevant to the political dynamics and outcomes of the redistricting process. If data fit with a parent code but not a particular subcode, I coded it with the parent code. For data coded as policy actors or influence efforts, where possible, I also coded it with a particular policy phase (i.e., initiation, enactment, implementation); this strategy allowed me to analyze whether and how actors and their influence efforts changed over the course of the redistricting process. The vast majority of data fit with my deductive codes, which suggests that my political framework was appropriate to study this case.

I began by coding documents, which were the largest source of qualitative data for this study, in June 2022, and continued coding observation field notes and interview transcripts through January 2023. Throughout the coding process, I wrote analytic memos, which Johnny Saldaña (2013) describes as “a place to “dump your brain” about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and thus writing and thus thinking even more about them” (p. 41).

After coding all documents, observation field notes, and interview transcripts, I used NVivo to run data queries, or generate documents that contained data coded to a particular code

or combination of codes. I ran queries for all codes to ensure that my qualitative findings addressed both my first research question—which asks about the contextual, systemic, and actor-level political dynamics that characterized redistricting—and all components of my conceptual framework. In alignment with my research questions and conceptual framework, I queried *policy actors*, *influence efforts*, and *prospects* codes in combination with each policy phase (*initiation*, *enactment*, *implementation*).

After generating these documents, I reviewed each for patterns that addressed my first research question using the constant comparative method of analysis (Glaser, 1965). This method involves, first, categorizing data into themes and constantly comparing new data added to a theme with existing data in that theme, and second, identifying whether themes were unique or whether some themes were merely different dimensions of a larger theme. For example, when reviewing a query result for actors’ policy goals during the enactment phase, one theme was that actors used the term “equity” to oppose redistricting. However, further review of data revealed that this theme had multiple dimensions, including one related to how actors conceptualized the term “equity” in their arguments against redistricting. Within themes, I also triangulated data (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2003) by comparing information from one source (e.g., interviews) with information from other sources (e.g., documents).⁴ Triangulating data from different qualitative sources allowed me to identify whether patterns were present in documentary data, observations, interviews, or a combination of the three.

Qualitative Data Limitations

Despite including multiple sources of qualitative data in this study, several limitations exist. First, HCPSS declined to participate in this study, so I did not interview any district

⁴ Documents generated by NVivo queries included both data and the source from which the data came.

officials (e.g., the superintendent). Consequently, my data may not represent district officials' perspectives as accurately as it represents other actors' perspectives. I accounted for this limitation by incorporating documents from HCPSS in my analysis, including press releases and presentations by the superintendent. Furthermore, interviews with AAC shed light on the superintendent's policy goals and the factors that influenced his recommended redistricting plan.

Additionally, I was not able to interview school board members who served during 2019-2020 or members of Howard County Families for Education Improvement (FEI), a politically active interest group that organized in opposition to redistricting. However, my observations of recordings of school board meetings provide valuable insights into board members' interests and influence strategies. I also attempted to capture the perspectives of FEI members by incorporating information on their website in my document analysis.

Finally, while my interview sample includes HCPSS parents from several areas in the county, my sample does not include any Asian parents who, as demonstrated in observations of public hearings and analysis of written testimonies, were actively involved in opposing redistricting. Despite this limitation, my observation and documentary data capture the perspectives of many Asian parents who participated in public hearings or submitted written testimony to the board. In addition, many parents in my interview sample described themselves as middle- or upper-middle-income, and no parents indicated that they were low-income. Given that many policy actors—namely, the superintendent—sought to redistrict to improve educational opportunities for low-income students, it is critical to understand low-income families' perspectives on the redistricting process and outcomes. Through observations and document analyses, my study may capture the perspectives of any low-income families who participated in public hearings or submitted testimony to the board, but it is not necessarily

representative of this population’s perspectives. Additionally, as many of my interview participants pointed out, higher-income families may be over-represented in written testimony and public hearing data, given that the time commitment these forms of participation often require and given that higher-income families may have more free or flexible time than low-income families.

Quantitative Data Sources

Quantitative data sources for this study (Appendix D) included district- and school-level student enrollment data by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (as measured by Free and Reduced-Price Meal (FRPM) status) for HCPSS’s 42 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, and 12 high schools. Tables 3, 4, and 5 present district- and school-level enrollment data by race/ethnicity and FRPM status in 2019, the year the board initiated redistricting. Enrollment data included school-level enrollment *rates* and enrollment *projections*, which I used to calculate racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation rates and projections at various points throughout the redistricting process. First, I used enrollment rates between 2010-2019 to calculate segregation trends in HCPSS in the decade leading up to redistricting. Second, I used enrollment projections associated with: a) the 13 redistricting plans that HCPSS’s Office of School Planning, the superintendent, and two school board members proposed between June and October 2019 (i.e., the proposed redistricting plans); and b) the redistricting plan that the school board enacted in November 2019 (i.e., the enacted redistricting plan). Finally, I used enrollment rates associated with the new school attendance boundaries that were implemented in August 2020 (i.e., the implemented redistricting plan). Enrollment projections and rates associated with the proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans provided information about each plan’s relative “prospects,” or potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation.

Put differently, these data provided insights into the degree to which proposed, enacted, and implemented redistricting plans could have or did fulfill their aims of redistributing students across schools by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Additionally, these data provided an opportunity to compare segregation rates associated with different versions of the redistricting plan with one another, which offered evidence about the degree to which policy actors' influence strategies "blunted" the redistricting plan (i.e., limited its potential to redistribute students) throughout the policy process.

Enrollment data came from two sources: the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD) and publicly available documents on the Howard County Board of Education's website. Data from both sources included seven mutually exclusive racial/ethnic categories (American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, two or more races, White) and one socioeconomic category (receives FRPM, does not receive FRPM). FRPM is an indicator of whether students are eligible to receive a free or reduced-price meal based on their household income. In 2019, federal guidelines indicated that students were eligible for a free meal if their household income was less than 130% of the federal poverty guidelines and eligible for a reduced-price meal if their household income was less than 185% of federal poverty guidelines (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2019).

Enrollment *rates*, which included data for 2010-2019 and the implemented redistricting plan, were from CCD. These data include enrollment rates that school systems across the U.S. report to the federal government each fall, around October 1st. They contain district- and school-level enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and FRPM status. I used these data to access district-level enrollment rates for HCPSS by race/ethnicity and FRPM status between 2010 and 2019 and for 2020, when the redistricting plan was implemented. I also used these data to access school-

Table 3. Elementary School Enrollment Rates in 2019 by Race/Ethnicity and FRPM Status

	% American Indian/ Alaska Native	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander	% 2+ races	% White	% FRPM
District Total	0.25	23.40	24.65	12.45	0.12	6.31	32.82	19.13
Elementary School								
Atholton	0	7.94	24.01	9.13	0	8.13	50.60	12.30
Bellow Springs	0.52	29.77	25.52	11.60	0	6.57	26.03	13.53
Bollman Bridge	0	8.76	38.56	24.71	0.26	6.67	21.05	42.75
Bryant Woods	0.22	3.35	54.46	12.50	0.22	8.26	20.98	42.86
Bushy Park	0.16	14.11	5.02	4.08	0.47	4.86	71.32	3.45
Centennial Lane	1.67	50.07	5.42	4.03	0	7.79	31.02	5.42
Clarksville	0	51.38	10.78	4.36	0	3.90	29.59	1.83
Clemens Crossing	0.20	15.75	16.73	9.65	0.20	8.66	48.82	10.43
Cradlerock	0.20	7.24	46.48	17.71	0	8.85	19.52	50.30
Dayton Oaks	0.28	24.44	9.31	5.42	0	7.08	53.47	5.00
Deep Run	0.78	12.91	14.34	45.37	0	5.48	21.12	49.93
Ducketts Lane	0.18	10.70	39.82	24.21	0.18	4.56	20.35	43.86
Elkridge	0.11	20.15	26.44	8.23	0.33	7.69	37.05	25.89
Forest Ridge	0.15	21.63	34.98	16.40	0.29	7.11	19.45	24.09
Fulton	0.10	28.99	16.06	4.60	0.10	8.72	41.43	3.72
Gorman Crossing	0.12	27.68	33.92	10.72	0.24	7.18	20.14	14.37
Guilford	0	15.58	48.42	13.68	0	6.32	16.00	39.16
Hammond	0.33	10.93	29.47	12.58	0.17	8.44	38.08	19.04
Hanover Hills	0.92	23.51	39.50	15.98	0	5.42	14.66	29.06
Hollifield Station	0.46	45.99	13.42	12.39	0.23	3.21	24.31	19.72
Ilchester	0.32	26.34	8.20	3.79	0.16	5.99	55.21	5.05
Jeffers Hill	0	9.66	39.37	21.74	0	8.70	20.53	32.37
Laurel Woods	0.16	11.16	48.53	28.68	0.16	4.81	6.51	55.66
Lisbon	0	3.61	1.13	9.03	0	6.55	79.68	10.16
Longfellow	0.22	7.61	33.33	22.82	0.45	10.96	24.61	39.37
Manor Woods	0	50.08	7.02	5.26	0	3.35	34.29	5.90
Northfield	0.43	25.21	9.97	8.12	0	8.12	48.15	9.12
Phelps Luck	0.16	6.32	34.44	36.33	0	7.90	14.85	60.82
Pointers Run	0.11	31.91	11.51	3.62	0.11	7.35	45.39	3.62
Rockburn	0.48	23.73	13.38	5.41	0	7.17	49.84	5.25
Running Brook	0	5.58	52.89	10.74	0.21	9.50	21.07	45.45
St. Johns Lane	0.13	34.03	12.96	5.63	0.13	4.06	43.06	7.33
Stevens Forest	0.23	5.63	37.32	32.39	0.23	9.39	14.79	58.45
Swansfield	0	6.94	55.34	19.22	0	6.05	12.46	54.80
Talbott Springs	0.20	4.91	40.28	27.70	0	7.47	19.45	48.53
Thunder Hill	0.21	19.58	28.21	10.32	0.21	8.21	33.26	18.11
Triadelphia Ridge	0.54	30.63	7.57	6.49	0.36	8.11	46.31	3.24
Veterans	0.10	51.87	13.51	7.80	0.73	3.43	22.56	16.42
Waterloo	0.17	20.60	30.56	5.81	0.50	6.98	35.38	20.27
Waverly	0.53	50.58	6.20	3.15	0	5.05	34.49	2.42
West Friendship	0	20.10	5.34	4.07	0.25	6.36	63.87	5.60
Worthington	0.39	39.76	6.69	7.48	0	6.50	39.17	4.53

Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

Table 4. Middle School Enrollment Rates in 2019 by Race/Ethnicity and FRPM Status

	% American Indian/ Alaska Native	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	% 2+ races	% White
District Total	0.25	23.40	24.65	12.45	0.12	6.31	32.82
Middle School							
Bonnie Branch	0.14	18.21	23.90	15.36	0	5.83	36.56
Burleigh Manor	0.62	49.82	10.48	4.19	0	5.06	29.84
Clarksville	0.28	43.10	7.61	3.10	0.14	4.37	41.41
Dunloggin	0	34.55	16.72	6.37	0.32	4.30	37.74
Elkridge Landing	0.26	15.84	25.79	8.12	0.26	6.02	43.72
Ellicott Mills	0.33	32.56	16.83	4.73	0.11	5.72	39.71
Folly Quarter	0.14	27.00	6.43	3.86	0.14	7.00	55.43
Glenwood	0.19	7.96	5.24	9.13	0	5.24	72.23
Hammond	0.17	11.46	26.74	10.63	0	9.14	41.86
Harpers Choice	0.61	7.30	47.87	16.23	0	9.53	18.46
Lake Elkhorn	0	8.69	51.95	18.79	0	7.98	12.59
Lime Kiln	0.30	26.67	14.09	3.94	0	7.58	47.42
Mayfield Woods	0.51	13.72	29.22	26.30	0.13	4.32	25.79
Mount View	0.23	38.80	5.16	4.10	0	5.98	45.72
Murray Hill	0.14	16.10	43.66	21.15	0.14	6.82	12.01
Oakland Mills	0	3.82	36.75	24.30	0	8.23	26.91
Patapsco	0	33.11	12.87	10.32	0.40	2.28	41.02
Patuxent Valley	0.14	15.62	42.26	18.19	0.29	5.73	17.77
Thomas Viaduct	0.27	15.26	46.59	17.71	0.14	5.72	14.31
Wilde Lake	0.29	7.42	46.14	13.25	0	6.50	23.87

Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

Table 5. High School Enrollment Rates in 2019 by Race/Ethnicity and FRPM Status

	% American Indian/ Alaska Native	% Asian	% Black	% Hispanic	% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	% 2+ races	% White
District Total	0.25	23.40	24.65	12.45	0.12	6.31	32.82
High School							
Atholton	0.14	19.66	25.27	9.38	0	5.82	39.73
Centennial	0.25	40.76	9.14	4.57	0.19	5.64	39.45
Glenelg	0.17	13.03	3.84	4.93	0.08	4.51	73.43
Hammond	0.29	10.55	40.53	16.71	0.14	7.10	24.68
Howard	0.16	16.91	22.15	6.96	0.21	6.60	47.02
Long Reach	0.18	12.91	36.20	22.88	0.12	5.90	21.82
Marriotts Ridge	0.20	37.23	9.24	3.13	0	4.28	45.92

Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

level enrollment rates for all 74 elementary, middle, and high schools in HCPSS by race/ethnicity and FRPM status between 2010 and 2019 and for 2020.

Enrollment *projections* for the redistricting plans that were proposed or enacted in 2019 were from publicly available documents on the Howard County Board of Education’s website. These data were enrollment projections by race/ethnicity and FRPM status that the district had

calculated, rather than enrollment rates, because these plans had not yet been implemented. Ten of the 13 proposed plans were from HCPSS's Feasibility Study, which the district's Office of School Planning (OSP) presented to the school board in June 2019. The OSP developed a Feasibility Study report, which was available on the school board's website, that contained projections associated with each of the ten proposed plans for the following: a) the total enrollment of each elementary, middle, and high school; b) the percentage of students at each school in each racial/ethnic group; and c) the percentage of students at each school receiving FRPM. Notably, some Feasibility Study plans proposed redistricting students at only elementary, middle, or high school levels, rather than at all levels. The report provided race/ethnicity and FRPM enrollment projections for schools at the level(s) students were proposed to be moved, but not for schools at the level(s) students were *not* proposed to be moved. For example, if a plan proposed moving students at the elementary school level but not the middle or high school levels, the report provided race/ethnicity and FRPM projections for elementary schools but not for middle or high schools. When race/ethnicity and FRPM projections were not available, I used 2019 race/ethnicity and FRPM enrollment rates from HCPSS, which were listed in the same report.

Furthermore, the Feasibility Study report provided race/ethnicity and FRPM enrollment projections in percentages. To calculate the projected *counts* of students in each racial/ethnic and FRPM group at each school, I multiplied the percentages by the school's projected total enrollment. Because of data privacy concerns, some data in the report were redacted. More specifically, if a group was less than or equal to 5% of a school's student population, the report provided an enrollment range, rather than an enrollment projection, for that group. For example, if 3% of students in a school were projected to receive FRPM, the report indicated that less than

or equal to 5% of students at that school were projected to receive FRPM. In cases where race/ethnicity and FRPM projections were redacted, I estimated enrollment projections using 2.5%.⁵ For example, if a school's projected FRPM enrollment was less than or equal to 5%, I estimated that it was 2.5%.

I also analyzed enrollment projections associated with the superintendent's proposed redistricting plan and with two redistricting plans proposed by individual board members. Enrollment projections associated with the superintendent's recommendation, proposed in August 2019, and with the two board members' plans, proposed in October 2019, were available on the school board's website. The OSP and the school boundary consultants hired by HCPSS developed the enrollment projections for these three proposals. Some proposals or segments of proposals included projections for school capacity utilization, or the percentage of a school's capacity that is projected to be used, rather than for school enrollment. In these cases, I calculated projected school enrollment by multiplying schools' projected capacity utilization by their capacity. Like the Feasibility Study plans, these proposals redacted some racial/ethnic and FRPM projections to maintain students' privacy. Where data were redacted, I used a 2.5% estimate to calculate schools' projected race/ethnicity and FRPM counts. Additionally, the plans proposed by board members included projections for FRPM rates but not for race/ethnicity rates, so I could not calculate racial/ethnic segregation rates associated with those two proposals.

The final set of enrollment projections I analyzed were associated with the redistricting plan that the school board voted to enact in November 2019. These projections were also

⁵ I estimated projections at 2.5% rather than 5% because calculating projections using 5% led to stark overestimates of school enrollment, which I discovered by comparing the total of racial/ethnic group projections and the total of FRPM group projections with the total projected enrollment provided in the report. Using the *average* of the potential projected enrollment (which ranged from 0-5%) led to a closer estimated of total projected enrollment and reduced the risk of under-counting students in groups whose data were redacted.

developed by the OSP and the school boundary consultants and made available on the school board's website. The enacted plan included total enrollment, race/ethnicity, and FRPM projections for each school. Like the other proposals, this plan included some redacted racial/ethnic and FRPM projections. In cases where data were redacted, I used a 2.5% estimate to calculate schools' projected race/ethnicity and FRPM counts.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis involved calculating racial/ethnic and FRPM segregation rates for 2010-2019, segregation projections for the proposed and enacted redistricting plans, and segregation rates for the implemented redistricting plan. The primary segregation index for this analysis was Theil's H (Theil, 1972), which measured the degree to which students in different racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups were evenly distributed across schools in HCPSS. In short, segregation as measured by H means that groups are unevenly distributed across schools within HCPSS.

H is also a multigroup measure of segregation, rather than a binary one, meaning that it can capture the increasing diversity—and increasingly complex patterns of segregation—in the U.S. overall and in diverse suburban communities like Howard County. H is the only multigroup measure of segregation that satisfies the principle of transfers, meaning that the index will not be biased by individuals transferring between organizational units (i.e., schools) with different group compositions (Reardon & Firebaugh, 2002). For this reason, scholars who study school segregation have suggested that it is “superior to other evenness indices” (Ayscue et al., 2018; p. 22).

H ranges from zero to one. For this analysis, an H value of zero indicates no segregation (i.e., every school is as diverse as the district), and a value of one indicates complete segregation

(i.e., students do not attend school with any student from a different group). Reardon and Yun (2003) developed the following “rough heuristic” (p. 1571) of H values, which other scholars have used when studying school segregation (e.g., Ayscue et al., 2018; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2021): below 0.10 indicates low segregation, between 0.10 and 0.25 indicates moderate segregation, above 0.25 indicates high segregation, and above 0.40 indicates extreme segregation. Reardon and Yun (2003) also argue that a change of H values by 0.05 or more over the course of a decade constitute a “significant change in segregation levels” (p. 1570). To calculate H , one must first compute entropy (E), or diversity, of the district. H measures diversity of each school relative to E , the diversity of the district overall. The formula for computing E is as follows:

$$E = \sum_{m=1}^m \pi_m \ln \left(\frac{1}{\pi_m} \right)$$

In this equation, m refers to a racial/ethnic or FRPM group; π_m is the proportion of group m in the district. The same formula is used to calculate E_i , which is the entropy of each school (i) in the district. E and E_i are then used to compute H :

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^n \left[\frac{t_i(E - E_i)}{ET} \right]$$

Here, n is the number of schools in HCPSS, t_i is the number of students in a school, and T is the total number of students in HCPSS. E represents the district’s diversity and E_i represents the diversity of school i .

I used Stata to calculate H by both race/ethnicity and FRPM status for 2010-2019, for the proposed and enacted redistricting plans, and for the implemented plan. For race/ethnicity, I calculated H for Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students; thus, H values for race/ethnicity

represent the evenness of the distribution of Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students within schools across HCPSS. My data sources also included enrollment rates and projections for students who were American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races, however, I did not include these groups in this analysis due to their small enrollment numbers (Tables 3, 4, 5). For FRPM status, I calculated H for students receiving FRPM and students not receiving FRPM. I analyzed H for 25 total points in time: 10 calculations for segregation rates in each year of the decade leading up to redistricting (2010-2019), 13 calculations for segregation projections associated with redistricting plans proposed between June and October 2019, one calculation for segregation projections associated with the redistricting plan the board enacted in November 2019, and one calculation for segregation rates associated with the new school attendance boundaries that the district implemented in August 2020. Because attendance area sizes vary for elementary, middle, and high schools, and because segregation tends to be higher in elementary schools than middle and high schools (Fiel & Zhang, 2018), I disaggregated analyses by school level.

I also analyzed enrollment data using the interaction index (P^*). Put simply, segregation as measured by P^* means that one group has little interaction with another because they are located in different schools. I measured segregation using P^* in addition to H to gain a more comprehensive understanding of segregation in HCPSS, given that the two measure different dimensions of segregation. While H measures the distribution of students across schools in the district (Theil, 1972), P^* measures the exposure of individuals in one group to individuals in another group (Massey & Denton, 1988). Thus, H provides information about how evenly students in different groups are distributed across the district, relative to populations of different student groups within the district, and P^* provides information about students' experiences

within schools by indicating the frequency with which they interact with peers in other groups. Unlike H , P^* is not dependent on the composition of groups in the district. For example, Black students may be overrepresented in one district while White students are overrepresented in a neighboring district. Yet, Black and White students may be evenly distributed across the districts in which they are concentrated. In this case, H may suggest low segregation in each district, failing to account for the vastly different student populations the two have. Alternatively, P^* may suggest high segregation between Black and White students in each district because the two groups have limited exposure to one another. Using P^* as an additional segregation measure for this study is particularly important because, although Howard County is racially/ethnically diverse, it is a very wealthy county with relatively low rates of students receiving FRPM. Consequently, H could indicate low socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS when FRPM and non-FRPM students have little exposure to one another within schools.

For this study, P^* measures the probability that members of one racial/ethnic or FRPM group share a school with members of another racial/ethnic or FRPM group. Because the index is a probability, it ranges from zero to one. Values closer to zero indicate higher segregation between two groups whereas values closer to one indicate lower segregation. Generally, P^* values may be interpreted relative to the overall population of students in a particular group. For example, a value may indicate that the average Asian student in HCPSS attended school with ten percent Black students. If Black students are 25% of HCPSS's population, this finding would suggest that the schools Asian students typically attend serve disproportionately fewer Black students than the district enrolls (Ayscue et al., 2018).

I computed P^* for combinations of the racial/ethnic groups included in H analyses: Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students. I also calculated the exposure of students receiving FRPM to students not receiving FRPM. P^* is calculated as follows:

$$P^* = \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{x_i}{X} \times \frac{y_i}{t_i} \right)$$

Here, n is the number of schools in HCPSS, x_i is the number of one group of students in school i , X is the total number of that group of students in the district, y_i is the number of another group of students in school i , and t_i is the total number of students in school i .

Quantitative Data Limitations

The quantitative data used in this study have several limitations. Put simply, the publicly available data for proposed and enacted redistricting plans—which I had to rely on after HCPSS declined to participate in this study—were, in some cases, incomplete, and in other cases, messy. In many ways, these data reflect the chaotic nature of the redistricting policy process, described in greater detail in subsequent chapters. First, board members’ proposals only included projections for FRPM rates, rather than projections for both FRPM and race/ethnicity rates. Consequently, I could not compare these plans with others on the dimension of projected racial/ethnic segregation. Second, because I had to calculate projected total enrollment, in some cases, and projected race/ethnicity and FRPM counts, in all cases, results may be imprecise and should be treated as *estimates* of segregation rates, rather than *actual* segregation rates. Most notably, my estimations of race/ethnicity and FRPM counts based on redacted data may have led me to over- or under-count certain groups in certain plans. However, the totals of racial/ethnic and FRPM counts that included estimates from redacted data aligned with HCPSS’s total

enrollment projections. Additionally, because I used the same method to calculate projections for each plan, my comparisons of these plans should be fairly accurate.

Additionally, although both CCD and HCPSS enrollment data include many racial/ethnic categories, these categories are not necessarily reflective of the racial/ethnic diversity of HCPSS students. For example, Howard County is home to many Chinese, Korean, and Indian families (Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, 2020). While these families likely have different experiences in the county and with HCPSS, their children are all counted as “Asian.” The same is likely true for Latinx families of various nationalities. Placing students of different ethnicities in the same racial category may minimize their unique experiences, particularly because research suggests that Asian and Latinx students with different nationalities may have vastly different socioeconomic statuses (Asante-Muhammad et al., 2021; Asante-Muhammad & Sim, 2020).

Finally, while analyzing FRPM data aligns with some policy actors’ goals of using redistricting to achieve a more even distribution of FRPM and non-FRPM students across schools, evidence suggests that FRPM may not be a reliable measure of students’ socioeconomic status. For example, scholars have suggested that FRPM reduces the vast income distribution of students to a binary indicator and is associated with many reporting issues (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2021). Thus, readers should interpret quantitative findings for this study as addressing *FRPM segregation*, rather than *socioeconomic segregation*.

Phase 2: Data Integration and Interpretation

The second phase of my mixed methods design involved integrating and interpreting the qualitative and quantitative datasets I generated through separate analyses. Data integration is the point in the research process “where the quantitative and the qualitative phases intersect”

(Creswell, 2015; p. 82); it may be viewed as the “mixing” (Creswell, 2015; p. 82) of quantitative and qualitative datasets. Mixed methods scholars have identified several types of data integration, including: *merging*, where the results of qualitative and quantitative analysis are brought together and compared; *explanation*, where one type of data are used to explain the results of the other; *building*, where one type of data are used to develop the data collection and analysis phase for the other type of data; and *embedding*, where one type of data are used to augment the other type of data (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). I used merging to integrate my qualitative and quantitative data for this study because it best aligned with the convergent parallel mixed methods design I employed.

I used two approaches to merge my qualitative and quantitative data. First, I used a side-by-side comparison, a strategy that is popular in convergent designs, which involves explaining how results from one set of data confirm, disconfirm, or extend results from the other set. In short, this strategy entails the researcher discussing how qualitative and quantitative findings compare (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I discuss alignment between qualitative and quantitative findings in each of the findings chapters (5-9) and in the significance chapter (10). Second, I created a “joint display” (Creswell, 2015; p. 84), included in Chapter 10, which arrays qualitative and quantitative results in a single visual to provide an easy comparison of findings from each dataset. This visual also describes how findings from each dataset converge and diverge.

Chapter Summary

This study employed a qualitative-dominant, convergent parallel mixed methods case study design. Qualitative data—including documents related to the redistricting process, observations of school board and county council meetings, and interviews with key policy

actors—provided information about the political factors that shaped HCPSS’s 2019-2020 redistricting effort. I used quantitative data, including racial/ethnic and FRPM enrollment rates and projections for HCPSS schools, to calculate segregation rates and projections. These data provided supplementary insights about the political factors that characterized the redistricting process, including actors’ policy goals, and provided information about the prospects, or potential to reduce segregation, associated with different versions of the redistricting plan that policy actors proposed, enacted, or implemented. After developing separate qualitative and quantitative datasets, I used a merging strategy to integrate the different types of data and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how political factors that animated the redistricting process influenced the redistricting policy’s prospects for reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation across schools in HCPSS.

Overview of Findings Chapters

The following five chapters discuss the findings of this study in alignment with my conceptual framework. Chapter 5 describes the sociopolitical context of Howard County and the institutional context of HCPSS that motivated and guided the 2019-2020 redistricting process. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 discuss how these contextual and systemic political factors interacted with actor-level factors across the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of the policy process, respectively. Findings chapters conclude with Chapter 9, which discusses the outcomes of redistricting after the district implemented the new school attendance boundaries.

Chapter 5: The Sociopolitical and Institutional Context of Howard County and the Howard County Public School System

This chapter first describes the contextual political factors that motivated and shaped the 2019-2020 redistricting effort in Howard County, when a growing and increasingly diverse population contributed to school overcrowding and segregation led the Board of Education to initiate the policy. Then, I discuss how systemic political factors—including the structure, procedures, values, and norms of the school district, school board, and county government—set both formal and informal parameters that affected the initiation, enactment, and implementation phases of redistricting.

Growth, Segregation, and Inequities in Howard County

Several factors led the Howard County Board of Education to redistrict school attendance boundary lines. Population growth and increasing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic diversity led both to overcrowding and segregation in schools, which imposed new burdens on the district and new inequalities between schools. Many county residents thought the school system could address these problems by redistricting.

Population Changes

Howard County's population grew substantially in the decade prior to the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. More than 12,000 people from surrounding areas moved to Howard County between 2013 and 2017 (Linsbey, 2019). The school board, county council, and district officials often discussed the county's growth and its impact on the school system in their quarterly joint meetings. HCPSS officials estimated that the district had grown by 1,000 students per year and projected that rate of growth into the foreseeable future. Between 2010 and 2019—the decade leading up to redistricting—the district's total enrollment ballooned from 50,783 to 57,057.

(Nocera, 2019e). At a January 2019 meeting, county councilmember Liz Walsh asked, “Where are we gonna put these kids?” lamenting that HCPSS was not building new schools fast enough to meet demand, even though the district had opened 37 new schools in the prior 30 years (1/28/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

Several interview participants believed that Howard County was growing because of its high-quality school system. For example, one former HCPSS student said that her parents had moved to Howard County when she was younger because it had “the best school system.” Participants also suggested that HCPSS’s reputation attracted specific groups to the county. One of the community’s Black leaders shared that many of the lower-income residents he works with in the county have moved from surrounding areas to access schools that they believed would better serve their children:

I think this is a problem of growth in the region, Howard County having a great reputation for its school system. ... We have low-income families who move here from Baltimore or Washington [D.C.] or Prince George’s County, wherever they move from, one, to work in the businesses in the area, but also, most importantly, to provide a better education opportunity for their children, who they feel would not otherwise get those same advantages in other school systems. Parents are willing to work in multiple jobs and live in smaller units so that they can afford to have their children in the school system here.

Similarly, an Asian parent said that the district had a “huge concentration of Korean American families” in part because “they have ads in Seoul, South Korea, for the Centennial School District [sic],” referring to a high school in the northern part of the county. Ultimately, most

participants felt that “Howard County is still where everybody wants to go for their kids if they can.”

As the county’s and district’s population has grown, it has also become more diverse. Most notably, the percentage of White students in the district fell from 50% in 2010 to 33% in 2019. At the same time, portions of Asian, Black, and Hispanic students grew: between 2010 and 2019, the percentage of Asian students increased from 16% to 23%; the percentage of Black students increased from 20% to 25%; and the percentage of Hispanic students increased from 8% to 12%. The county has also become more socioeconomically diverse over time. Between 2010 and 2019, the population of students receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals (FRPM) in HCPSS grew from 16% to 19%. At the elementary level, FRPM rates increased from 18% to 21%. These trends suggest that the district is serving increasingly more low-income students; a trend that officials expect to continue over the next ten years (Nocera, 2019ad). HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano reiterated those statistics in a 2019 meeting with the county council and school board, noting the “shifts of our [Howard County’s] poverty” and “these chasms [between] a school that is close to 70 percent [FRPM] and schools that are less than that.” In another joint meeting in early 2019, councilmember Opel Jones suggested that the district’s poverty rate was closer to 30%, and described how one elementary school in his district served a high percentage of students receiving FRPM while others had much lower rates. Indeed, in 2019, FRPM rates in HCPSS elementary, middle, and high schools ranged from less than 5% to greater than 60%.

Several interview participants attributed increasing poverty rates in Howard County to an influx of residents from lower-income areas that surrounded it—particularly Baltimore. One White parent claimed that the Howard County Executive, who was Black, had “taken in a lot of the subsidized housing, the vouchers from Baltimore City, and brought in those people into

Howard County, specifically into Columbia.” She argued that these demographic changes had been “detrimental” to the county and its school system. An Asian parent agreed that the county was “mov[ing] people with housing vouchers from Baltimore to Howard County.” And one White parent suggested that the influx of lower-income families had exposed wealth disparities in a county where some special programs required parents to pay hundreds or even thousands of dollars out-of-pocket. She said:

Some schools used to go to Disney [for band trips] and now they can’t go to Disney, or people are like, “Oh my god, it’s \$3,000 to go to Disney. Some people are like, “Oh my god, we’re not going to Disney,” and other people are like, “Are you crazy? I can’t afford to send my kid to Disney!” There’s two different worlds in there.

This parent further suggested that these demographic changes “are disrupting people’s lives because, in order to be equitable, some schools have to lose the perks they originally had.”

Overcrowding

Population changes in Howard County led to severe overcrowding in HCPSS schools. Many elementary, middle, and high schools had more students than seats, and while some remained under-enrolled, there were only 303 seats available at the elementary school level, nine at the middle school level, and a shortage of 353 at the high school level (Nocera, 2019a). School board members often shared concerns about how overcrowding impacted students; in one meeting, several board members discussed not having enough recess and lunch monitors and buses to meet growing school enrollments.

To identify overcrowding (or under-enrollment), the district calculated each school’s “capacity utilization,” or the percentage of a school’s capacity being used. The district’s target capacity utilization for schools in 2019 was between 90 and 110%, but many schools were well

above that range and a few were below it. For example, in 2019, HCPSS projected that elementary school capacity would soon exceed 110% if they could not build new schools. One news article described how an elementary school that was over capacity was “literally bursting at the seams” (Nocera,2019c). For the 2019-2020 school year, the district projected that one middle school would be at 131%. Some high schools were hundreds of students over capacity as well. Hammond High School, for example, enrolled 1,360 students in fall 2018 while its capacity was 1,220.

Overcrowding was largely concentrated in schools in the eastern part of the county. At several school board meetings and joint meetings between the board and the county council, HCPSS’s Office of School Planning shared that schools in eastern Howard County were overcrowded, while schools in western Howard County had capacity available. One interview participant who was a PTA member at a school in the east said that her child’s school had “a continual influx of new people constantly. ... Over the course of a school year, we gain 50, 60 kids.” Several parents of children in eastern HCPSS schools whom I interviewed said they were worried about the effect of overcrowding on their children’s experiences in school. For example, one parent said that she was “totally saddened by the fact that some kids would have to actually go outside of the school to get from class to class. ... I have a child with sensory issues. She’s like, ‘I’m late to class.’ I said, ‘Why are you late to class?’ [She said,] ‘there are so many kids.’” Another parent was concerned that children at her daughter’s school did not have enough time to eat their lunch: “We have 150 kids per grade level and you have half an hour for lunch. ... The kids barely have time to eat because they can’t get through the lunch lines.”

The most overcrowded school at the time was Howard High School (HHS). In fall 2019, HHS was almost 500 students over capacity and at approximately 140% utilization. One parent I

interviewed whose children were districted to HHS said, simply, the school is “way too crowded, absolutely way too crowded.” Other HHS parents talked about the “struggle” of attending a school as overcrowded as HHS. For example, one parent said:

I don't even think they [people in western Howard County] understood how overcrowded things were in Howard, where you could not walk to class in time. ... Nobody in high school uses lockers because there's no time to go to your lockers, and there's no time to go to your lockers because you can't get through the halls. ... Sports teams, extracurriculars, you're competing with twice as many kids, so you're losing out on opportunities to do these different things. ... Parents end up doing rec sports instead, or other extracurriculars, because there's just not the opportunity [at HHS].

Another interview participant whose son graduated from HHS agreed that “it's harder [at HHS] to get onto sports teams. It's harder to get into the high school plays. It's just harder.”

Other HHS parents whom I interviewed believed that overcrowded conditions were inequitable and unsafe. For example, one parent who had attended an overcrowded school herself explained:

[Overcrowding] was something that I dealt with growing up. I grew up in Chicago and went to a very overcrowded elementary school, which was all the way to eighth grade. I knew that [overcrowding at HHS] wasn't a good situation. I knew a lot of kids weren't able to participate in activities, sports, because there just wasn't enough slots for them to participate. I know a lot of folks would just put their kids in outside things to make up for that difference, but I was concerned about those kids that their families couldn't afford to do that. That seemed inequitable to me.

Another parent whose son graduated from HHS said that her son did not want his little sister to attend the school because he would be “worried that she’ll get crushed in the hallway.” This parent also worried that her children were more exposed to gun violence at HHS because many students had to walk outside to get to class to get there on time. She said:

Many of them [HHS students] would not walk through the hallways. They would walk around the outside of the building to get to classes. Rain, shine, snow, whatever, and that was a risk after Parkland⁶ and everything, and shooters and everything. You’re constantly worried, “Okay, if they’re walking around the outside of the building, they’re a sitting duck from the main road.”

Students at HHS also expressed some concerns about safety beyond school doors. For example, a student who was interviewed for a 2019 news article about overcrowding in HHS shared that she and other students often have to squeeze three students into a two-seater on buses because they are so crowded. As a result, students often fall into the middle of the aisle while riding to or from school (Nocera, 2019m).

Many interview participants from eastern Howard County—particularly those living in Elkridge, located in the northeastern part of the county—said they had advocated for the district to build new schools there to alleviate severe overcrowding. Furthermore, one Elkridge resident noted that, while there were “an abundance of elementary schools” and several middle schools in the Elkridge area, there were no high schools. She and several other Elkridge residents shared the sentiment that “the schools aren’t where they are needed” and that “Elkridge [had] needed a high school for a long time”—especially because the area had experienced “revitalization and growth”

⁶ This parent was referring to the shooting at Parkland High School in Parkland, Florida, which occurred in February 2018.

since the early 2000s. Another Elkridge resident also believed that the area needed a high school to accommodate its growing student population:

For many decades, people have been trying to get a high school built in Elkridge. ... I guess long ago in the '50s or something they had all these little area high schools and then they built Howard High School and closed all the smaller ones. Every other school that they had closed. ... All the other little schools that they closed, they ended up opening a new school in that area, except for Elkridge. ... We have all these kids. It's like a high school and a half of kids. But there's no school.

Overcrowding was also high on the minds of Elkridge parents because many of them had children who attended, or would attend, HHS. As one Elkridge parent argued, "The kids that live in Elkridge are going to Howard, which is ridiculously overcrowded. We need a school."

In 2017, many Elkridge parents in the HHS attendance zone began advocating for the county's next high school to be built in Elkridge. One parent who was highly involved with this effort said that parents in Elkridge "basically forced their [the district's] hand to do something, and that forcing their hand to do something was putting High School 13 [the next high school to be built] in its place." But while their advocacy may have pressured the district to build the new school on the eastern side of the county, it did not result in a new school in Elkridge; instead, the school board voted to build the new school in Jessup, a community in the southeastern region of the county. Several Elkridge residents whom I interviewed said that the board voted to build the school in Jessup rather than Elkridge because the only site available to build a school in Elkridge was parkland. One Elkridge parent noted that the battle over where to build High School 13 divided her community: "Elkridge fought amongst itself really ugly, really nasty, where one side was "Save Rockburn Park!" and one side was like, "We need an Elkridge high school." The

board’s decision to build High School 13 in Jessup, rather than Elkridge, left a sour taste in the mouths of many Elkridge residents with whom I spoke, who believed that they had voted to build it in “the wrong place.”

While Elkridge residents were concerned about the location of High School 13, district officials and school board members were concerned about the timeline for building it. The dramatic growth and uneven distribution of the student population across the county pressured the district to provide more relief for overcrowding. At a 2019 meeting between the school board and county council, board member Jen Mallo said that the district needed to “build a school a year” to address population changes. Christiana Mercer Rigby, chair of the county council at the time, replied that the county had “no financial way to do that” (6/24/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting). Indeed, the district said that it could not build any new schools until 2023. Superintendent Martirano and others who worked for the district said that the building delay stemmed from difficulty acquiring land and a lengthy construction timeline. According the superintendent, elementary schools typically take three years to build, middle schools typically take three or four years, and high schools typically take five years—which was particularly concerning given that overcrowding was most severe at the high school level. Additionally, the district had to work with the state to acquire the funds needed to build a new school. In another 2019 meeting between the county council, school board, and district, Superintendent Martirano said that he had pleaded with the state for more funding for capital projects because of the county’s fast growth, but that his request “fell on deaf ears” (1/28/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

“Terrible” Development and Zoning Policies

Residents in Elkridge and beyond attributed most of the district's overcrowding woes to the county government's poor development and zoning decisions; this theme was prevalent in interview, documentary, and—to a lesser extent—observational data. Many argued that one source of overcrowding was allowing developers to build in areas zoned to schools that were already overcrowded. In response to a 2019 survey about redrawn attendance boundaries that HCPSS conducted, one respondent said, "Developers are allowed to build in already crowded school zones without serious consideration of the consequences. Our kids are the ones who suffer." Another wrote that "school overcrowding has not happened in a vacuum; it has happened in the context of unchecked growth in certain areas of the county without adequate planning for additional schools." Similarly, one interview participant who was a former HCPSS student argued that the county was naïve about how their development decisions would affect schools. She explained:

I remember they [developers] built a whole brand new apartment complex with 400 new apartments, and they were like, "Yes, there's only going to be half of a student [attending HCPSS schools] per every two apartments." I was like, "How the heck are you trying to justify that? You're saying that there's only 100 new students coming from that 400?" No, there's no way. Then the schools get overcrowded.

Even some county councilmembers agreed that they needed to get a better handle on development. For example, at a joint meeting between the school board and county council in fall 2019, councilmember Deb Jung explained, "We have to be thinking as a county council and as a school board, 'Where is the capacity? Where are we going to put housing allocations?' so we're not always just trying to catch up. And we've been doing that for two decades, and that's a lot of time to play catch up" (9/23/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

Several interview participants and survey respondents also explained that the county government's development decisions were overwhelming Columbia, Elkridge, and other communities in the eastern part of the county, in particular. In the words of one respondent, "There is an overcrowding problem on the east side of the county. Yet they are continuously approving housing projects when there is no room in schools." Another participant said:

Columbia was ... a planned city, and things are really greatly planned, but now they [county government officials] are starting to add development and they're not planning for it too. They're beefing up homes in downtown Columbia—condos and apartments—and they're not putting in the necessary school capacity.

Other interview participants and survey respondents explained that "too much" development has occurred on the far-eastern side of the county in and around Elkridge. One respondent argued that the county was allowing developers to build "on every inch of ground in Elkridge."

Interview participants from Elkridge seemed to agree. Elkridge resident said, "There has been phenomenal growth in this planning region of the county, so much growth. High-density growth, single-family home growth, just tremendous growth."

Over-development in the east stood in stark contrast with limited development in the west, largely because western Howard County does not have the infrastructure to support a higher population density. Several interview participants described how uneven development across the county was contributing to unevenly overcrowded schools. For example, one participant described how developers have fewer opportunities to build in the west because that part of the county has septic tanks rather than a sewer system. He explained that "the western part of the county, which is on septic, they can't build ... so they typically have low school

populations.” Other participants cited a similar reason for the limited development out west. For example, one participant explained:

You move further west, there are far fewer townhomes, more single-family. There’s definitely fewer apartments. Not a lot of, I would say, multifamily housing. ... Part of the reason for that is that out west they are on well water. The county never made the, I guess, investments in connecting the western parts of the county to the public water system. I don’t know if that was on purpose or not. Because they’re on well water, the homes have to be on an acre or more. The expansion that way can’t really happen.

Several participants noted that these building restrictions resulted in concentrations of single-family homes in the west and higher concentrations of multifamily and lower-income housing in the east, which then contributed to higher percentages of lower-income students in eastern Howard County schools. As one parent from eastern Howard County explained:

They [community members] will say ... “Why don’t you build low-income housing or modest housing out west?” Well, you can’t. It has to be at, like, a townhouse. It’s hard to do on well water. It just doesn’t happen. That’s why it [development] tends to happen south, where we are in east, south and east, and when the schools get overwhelmed with high-need students, because lower-income housing tends to bring more high-need students for whatever reason.

Thus, many participants perceived that development patterns in Howard County had contributed to two seemingly separate but interrelated issues: *overcrowding* and *segregation*, which I discuss in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

School overcrowding in HCPSS has often been a product of public policy rather than private decisions, particularly around issues of zoning and land use. One of these policies was

the district's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO), a zoning regulation that limits housing construction in elementary, middle, and high school zones so that schools do not already exceed set capacity limits, which range from 105% in elementary schools to 115% in high schools. APFO prohibits residential development in an area if it is over its capacity limit, and areas are considered "open" for development if they are below the threshold. In 2019, 18 of 42 elementary schools, six of 20 middle schools, and six of 12 high schools were constrained (Logan & Nocera, 2019). In theory, APFO is a tool that the county and district could use to manage overcrowding in these schools. However, as one interview participant who was well-versed in the county's zoning policies pointed out, APFO only paused development in an over-capacity region for a limited time:

It [APFO] said if the elementary school and the middle school in the area were at, I think at that time it was 120% and 115% or something, within that range of utilization, then development is paused for a maximum of four years or until such [earlier] time that the capacity falls below that 120% or 115% threshold. Every year, that project would be in a waiting bin. It would wait, and so year one, it's tested. If school capacity is still 120% and over, it waits in the bin. Year two, it gets tested, year three gets tested, and year four gets tested. At year four, if it's still over 120%, the project moves forward regardless of whether the school capacity has gone down or not. Typically, it would just go up. It doesn't go down.

The waiting period for new development is meant to give county and district policymakers time to address existing capacity issues before new ones arise, but the duration of overcrowding issues in HCPSS suggests that either policymakers do not have the capacity or will to address those issues, or that the waiting period is not long enough for them to do so. Some county

councilmembers have tried for several years to increase the time developers have to wait to move forward with projects in constrained areas, but those efforts have generally failed.

Another policy related to county zoning that several participants identified as flawed—and that one participant described as “terrible”—related to school surcharge fees, which the county requires developers to pay when building new residences. The fees help cover construction, renovation, and maintenance costs for the school system. In 2019, Howard County’s school surcharge fee for building new residential housing was \$1.32 per square foot (Nocera, 2019n). So, in 2019, it would cost builders approximately \$2,640 in school surcharge fees to build a 2,000 square foot home. A few participants argued that these fees were too low. For example, one described the low fee per square foot as “a drop in the bucket” for developers and suggested that the fee was “very low” relative to neighboring counties. Indeed, Montgomery County, Maryland’s school surcharge fee, which they refer to as a school impact tax, for single-family homes was approximately \$23,000 in 2019—roughly ten times the fee in Howard County (Anderson, 2019). Interview participants generally agreed that Howard County’s low fees handcuffed the district in its ability to combat overcrowding by building more schools and renovating existing ones. As one participant explained:

There’s only going to be more kids coming in [to schools in the county]. ... The developers, I feel, need to have a financial responsibility in terms of helping the county build more schools. That’s really, it’s truly the only way that you’re going to fix the overcrowding.

Respondents to HCPSS’s survey of school attendance boundary options also called for “tighter regulations by the county on development” and pleaded for the district and county to “hold the developers more accountable and not make the students of HCPSS suffer.”

Prior Redistricting Efforts (or Lack Thereof)

Interview, documentary, and observational data also suggest that many community members and, to a lesser extent, elected officials in Howard County believed that prior school redistricting decisions had created both overcrowded and under-enrolled schools. In a 2019 joint meeting between the county council and school board, Superintendent Michael Martirano explained that, while HCPSS had redistricted frequently since 1990, redistricting decisions to date had largely been school-specific, meaning that they only impacted one or a few schools at a time, rather than balancing enrollments across the school system as a whole. In 2017, when Martirano became interim superintendent, he proposed redistricting 8,800 students in schools across HCPSS. However, the board voted to move only about a quarter of that proposed number. When that redistricting went into effect in 2018, 11 of 42 elementary schools and nine of 20 middle schools were impacted. However, the redistricting plan did not change any high school boundaries, which left overcrowded high schools overcrowded and under-enrolled high schools under-enrolled. Most of the 31 elementary schools that were not impacted by the 2018 decision had been redistricted in the early 2010s or 2000s, but some had not been redistricted in decades. For example, school board documents indicated that Swansfield Elementary School in Columbia, a school that has historically served high percentages of racially/ethnically minoritized and FRPM students, had not been redistricted since 1987, despite having a consistently low enrollment. The 11 middle schools that were not impacted in 2018 had all been redistricted within the 21st century. However, Ellicott Mills Middle School, which was projected to reach over 130% capacity utilization in 2019, had not been redistricted since 2014. Similarly, Dunloggin Middle School, which was projected to reach 116% capacity utilization in 2019, had not been redistricted since 2006. Redistricting at the high school level over the two decades

leading up to 2019 had been even scarcer. The most recent year a high school had been redistricted was 2010. And two of the district's most overcrowded schools—Centennial High School and Howard High School—had not been redistricted since 2006 and 2005, respectively, despite Centennial being projected to reach 120% capacity utilization in 2019 and Howard being projected to reach 135%.

The district's failure to redistrict more frequently and comprehensively allowed existing capacity issues in HCPSS to persist and new ones to emerge. Interview participants frequently described how a lack of redistricting in the past had worsened overcrowding and under-enrollment in many schools. For example, one county leader noted that “the school system really hadn't redistricted comprehensively in several years” and that “they tended to do more area-specific redistricting, not looking at the whole.” An elected official in the county agreed that the district had failed to take actions that could address overcrowding. He further suggested that failing to redistrict regularly in a place growing as fast as Howard County would make future redistricting efforts more difficult, and more politically contentious, because they would need to move more students to address capacity issues. Similarly, Calvin Ball, the Howard County Executive in 2019, wrote in an op-ed that the county “[had] not seen truly comprehensive redistricting in years” and called current school boundaries “obsolete” (Ball, 2019). Participants thought the district's failure to redistrict had worsened school conditions over time. For example, parents whose children attended Oakland Mills Middle and High Schools, which were consistently under capacity, described how “past redistricting decisions is how you end up with some schools that are, you know, very much over capacity, and other schools that maybe aren't so much over capacity.” Another Oakland Mills parent argued that the district “kick[ed] the can down the road” and left schools in the district “in such a bad position because the board never

wants to redistrict” and “no one ever wants to be responsible for moving kids.” Indeed, as discussed later in this chapter, qualitative evidence suggested that prior superintendents and board members had been unwilling to redistrict because of parents’ resistance to it—particularly to being redistricted to more diverse schools.

Interview participants and others in the county agreed that Howard High School (HHS) had suffered the most from a lack of redistricting. For example, in a 2019 meeting, school board member Vicky Cutroneo said she thought the board had missed their chance to alleviate overcrowding at HHS by not redistricting in the past. Qualitative data suggested that the school board had failed to redistrict HHS in the past because they feared the political repercussions of moving HHS students to under-enrolled schools—including Long Reach High School (LRHS) and Oakland Mills High School (OMHS), which served higher percentages of racially/ethnically minoritized and FPRM students than HHS and which HHS parents perceived as less desirable. One interview participant whose daughter attended an elementary school in the Columbia neighborhood of Oakland Mills explained that redistricting HHS students to LRHS or OMHS was “generally not okay with Howard parents ... even though they [HHS, LRHS, and OMHS] are all the same distance from each other.” Likewise, a participant whose daughter attended school in Elkridge, east of Columbia, explained that parents whose children attend schools near Oakland Mills often had the following reaction when the board proposed moving students to OMHS:

Everybody’s like, “No, you can’t send us to Oakland Mills.” Oakland Mills has a horrible reputation, but it also has an extremely high FARMs [Free and Reduced Meals] rate. ... It [poverty] is basically concentrated there. Nobody wants to move there.

This participant also said that, in one prior redistricting effort, the Attendance Area Committee (AAC), which was comprised of community members who recommended redistricting plans to the school board, proposed moving students from HHS to LRHS. HHS parents resisted the AAC's proposal. She explained:

The AAC proposed moving kids from Howard to Long Reach. That was when it went bad. There was a paper that circulated around, I call it the yellow paper. It was a flyer that was shared and it lists all the reasons why you should not want your kids to go to Long Reach. It was about their test scores and it was about their participation in the PTA. It was like, "Here's Howard, here's Long Reach, here's why you should refuse going to Long Reach."

The proposal to redistrict students from HHS to LRHS was unpopular enough to elicit death threats against district leaders. Another participant from Elkridge offered a similar description of parents' resistance, which she attributed to racism:

The problem has always been that you have basically a bunch of racists in Elkridge who have all been super loud and would never want to redistrict. Why do you think Oakland Mill's capacity is always under? It's because Howard's parents would just scream bloody murder if you wanted to move them to Oakland Mills.

In sum, qualitative evidence suggested that HCPSS officials had failed to redistrict comprehensively prior to 2019 because they feared pushback from parents at wealthier, whiter schools like HHS, who did not want their children to attend lower-income schools with higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students. Thus, race and racism were central aspects of both parents' *perspectives* on redistricting and officials' *decisions* regarding redistricting.

While parents complained about overcrowding at HHS, under-enrollment confronted Oakland Mills High School (OMHS) with another set of problems. Several interview participants from Oakland Mills explained that OMHS and Oakland Mills Middle School (OMMS) had “suffered” because the schools could not get state funding to address maintenance issues. As one Oakland Mills resident explained, “school funding from the state is based on capacity need, so if you don’t have a school that is full, you cannot get the match for renovations.” Limited funding was particularly problematic in the eyes of Oakland Mills residents because, as one resident described, those schools had “the majority of all the deferred maintenance in the whole county.” Another interview participant described the OMHS building as “old, disgusting, and aged.” Many, though not all, under-enrolled schools, including those in Oakland Mills, served relatively high percentages of low-income, Black, and Hispanic students. Consequently, limited funding and inadequate facilities disproportionately affected minoritized students. As explained later in this chapter, these were not the only racial/ethnic and socioeconomic inequities that existed between schools in HCPSS.

Many interview participants thought the superintendent’s failed attempt to comprehensively redistrict in 2017, in particular, was a missed opportunity. One interview participant whose children were slated to attend HHS said that she and several of her neighbors testified to the board in 2017 that they needed to redistrict because “Howard became critical mass,” “it was dangerous,” and “these kids [HHS students] are being [put] at a disadvantage.” She said that, rather than coming up with a reasonable strategy to address this issue, “the school board at the time thought of the most ridiculous plans.” She described how board members discussed removing one group of students at HHS (e.g., the freshman class) from the HHS building and housing them in an “old decrepit building” while the district built a new school.

To alleviate some overcrowding—and avoid redistricting—in 2017, the school board also introduced a special program that was essentially a magnet school approach. The program, named JumpStart, aimed to draw students from HHS to less crowded schools. The district described the program as a partnership between HCPSS and a local community college that allowed students to “gain college credits, explore possible careers, or earn an associate degree;” it was available to all HCPSS students but catered towards rising freshmen and sophomores. The formal program was offered at two schools that were under capacity: River Hill High School (RHHS), a predominantly White and Asian school with a low FRPM rate, and OMHS, which was predominantly Black and Hispanic and had an FRPM rate well above the district’s average. But JumpStart was no panacea for capacity issues. While one interview participant thought that JumpStart provided “a little bit of relief,” another explained that the program “fell flat” because “it didn’t move the amount of people they needed to move.” The program also did not appear to diversify enrollments at RHHS and OMHS, as many magnet programs aim to do. As described in the following sections, both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation grew in the decade leading up to the 2019-2020 redistricting effort.

Diversity and Equity, Segregation and Racism

While HCPSS was grappling with school capacity issues, it was also dealing with segregation and the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic inequities that stemmed from it. Although several interview participants touted the county’s diversity as one of its greatest strengths, many believed that the county was becoming increasingly segregated. Like most school districts in the U.S., HCPSS has a long history of segregation. For almost a century prior to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, and for about a decade after, Howard County operated separate schools for Black and White students. Resource and opportunity disparities between Black and

White schools were egregious. For example, Black schools received second-hand books from White schools, if and when White schools received new books, and Black students could not attend school beyond the 7th grade until the late 1930s. When *Brown* (1954) made operating racially separate school systems unconstitutional, the Howard County Board of Education—comprised of just three members at the time—hesitated to desegregate (Cornelison et al., 1986). Board members made the following statement at a June 1955 meeting:

The Howard County Board of Education discussed the Supreme Court’s opinion on the public school segregation cases and the many problems confronting the Board because of the Court’s decision. There are problems related to personnel, school plan, transportation, and the administration of the school system which need clarification under the ruling.

Due to the magnitude of the problem and its many implications, the Board decided it was not wise under the circumstances to make any judgments or decisions until further study can be made. Such a study has been in progress for some time and will be continued until sufficient information has been obtained upon which to base a course of action (Guilford Area History, n.d.).

It was not until May 1956 that the school system announced it would implement a desegregation policy. The policy, which would begin in the 1956-1957 school year, was voluntary transfers: the county’s six all-Black schools would remain open, but Black children in first through fifth grade could request to attend all-White schools. However, Black children and their parents had to appear before the school board to request a transfer, which the board was not guaranteed to approve (Cornelison et al., 1986; The Washington Post, 2004). In a 2004 news article, one Black Howard County resident whose family had played an active role in the civil rights movement described this policy as “hurtful.” She elaborated:

The parents had to go to the board and have questions asked. You didn't know then and there if your child was accepted. I guess they were trying to pick the cleanest looking kids to go to the white school (DeFord, 2004).

The district's new voluntary desegregation policy also stipulated that school buses would remain segregated, and set a slow pace for desegregating middle and high schoolers; one grade of Black students in each subsequent year would be allowed to request transfers to all-White schools, beginning with 6th graders in 1957 and ending with seniors in 1963 (The Washington Post, 2004). Voluntary desegregation policies like this one were common across districts in the South, and they were largely unsuccessful at desegregating schools (Patterson, 2001; D. Reed, 2014).

The board expanded upon their voluntary desegregation policy in 1963, when they decided to expand the all-Black Harriet Tubman High School and to begin sending White students there in 1966. In June 1964, however, a new school board of five members voted to close four all-Black schools in the county within a month; several months later, the board voted to close Harriet Tubman High School rather than expanding it to accommodate the addition of White students (The Washington Post, 2004). Many Black students from Harriet Tubman were sent to Howard High School (DeFord, 2004). It was not until 1965, after closing almost all of the Black schools in the county, that Black and White students attended desegregated schools (The Washington Post, 2004).

Around the same time, James Rouse, a businessman from a small city on the eastern shore of Maryland, was developing the planned Community of Columbia. In stark contrast with the otherwise segregated county, Rouse envisioned Columbia as a racially/ethnically and socioeconomically integrated community (Columbia Association, 2019b). Columbia's motto was "The Next America," named for its progressive vision (Goldstein, 2019). Rouse designed

Columbia's villages to have mixed income housing options, and built low-income housing next to single-family homes (Stamp, 2014). He also planned for different religious groups to share interfaith centers, rather than having their own places of worship (Hurley, 2017). Fittingly, the first baby born to Columbia residents was biracial, with one Black and one White parent; as one news article wrote, "the child was a poignant symbol of the community's professed values" (Goldstein, 2019). Yet, as described later in this chapter, Columbia's values were not necessarily shared by county residents as a whole. And as described in subsequent chapters, value conflicts between Columbia and the rest of the county, and between residents of different villages *within* Columbia, undergirded much of the political chaos that ensued during HCPSS's 2019-2020 redistricting effort.

In the decades that followed, Howard County and HCPSS grew in both population and diversity, and both the county and the school district came to embrace "Columbia values" as its own. Howard County has been described as "a liberal Maryland suburb founded on values of tolerance," (Goldstein, 2019), "a county that prides itself on diversity and inclusion," (St. George, 2019), and, consequently, "the ideal district in Maryland to carry the desegregation banner" (Baltimore Sun Editorial Board, 2019). Many community members, elected officials, district officials, and others across the county discuss equity as a value and guiding principle. As one interview participant said, "everyone in Howard County has heard the word equity;" "we take diversity and equity very seriously." Equity is a central value for the Howard County Public School System too. HCPSS's superintendent Michael Martirano has said that his "whole life as an educator has been predicated on equity" (Meyer, 2020e). To Martirano, the "ultimate measure" of equity is a district or school's graduation rate. In his words:

Equity has become a convenient talking point for educational and political leaders alike. For Howard County schools, it has become ingrained as a fundamental value that drives the work that we do. ... Graduation rate is the ultimate measure by which a school district gauges success, and the only way to move that needle upward is ensuring that every student has the right supports and a school environment that enables them to thrive (Martirano, 2019).

On several occasions, Martirano has stated that his ultimate goal is to have every HCPSS student graduate; he refers to this goal as “the north star” for the district (Nocera, 2020a; Nocera, 2019o).

In line with his commitment to equity, Martirano created a Strategic Call to Action (SCTA) for HCPSS entitled “Learning and Leading with Equity.” He introduced the SCTA in 2017, his first term as superintendent, and implemented it the following year. According to district documents, the SCTA “serves as the foundation for all HCPSS decisions and places students at the heart of all practices” and “outlines a commitment to closing opportunity gaps and supporting the needs of students in order to ensure that all students acquire the skills, attributes, and knowledge necessary to become global citizens” (Howard County Public School System, 2019b). The SCTA is grounded in HCPSS’s commitment to equity, which it defines as “providing the access, opportunity and supports needed to help students, families, and staff reach their full potential by removing barriers to success that individuals face” (Howard County Public School System, 2019b). The SCTA identifies 15 desired outcomes for HCPSS, which district staff track on a yearly basis. Many desired outcomes relate to postsecondary success and are measured by specific indicators, including PSAT scores, career readiness test scores, and graduation rates. Other desired outcomes relate to students’ experiences in HCPSS, like incorporating student voice in teaching strategies, providing high-quality special education

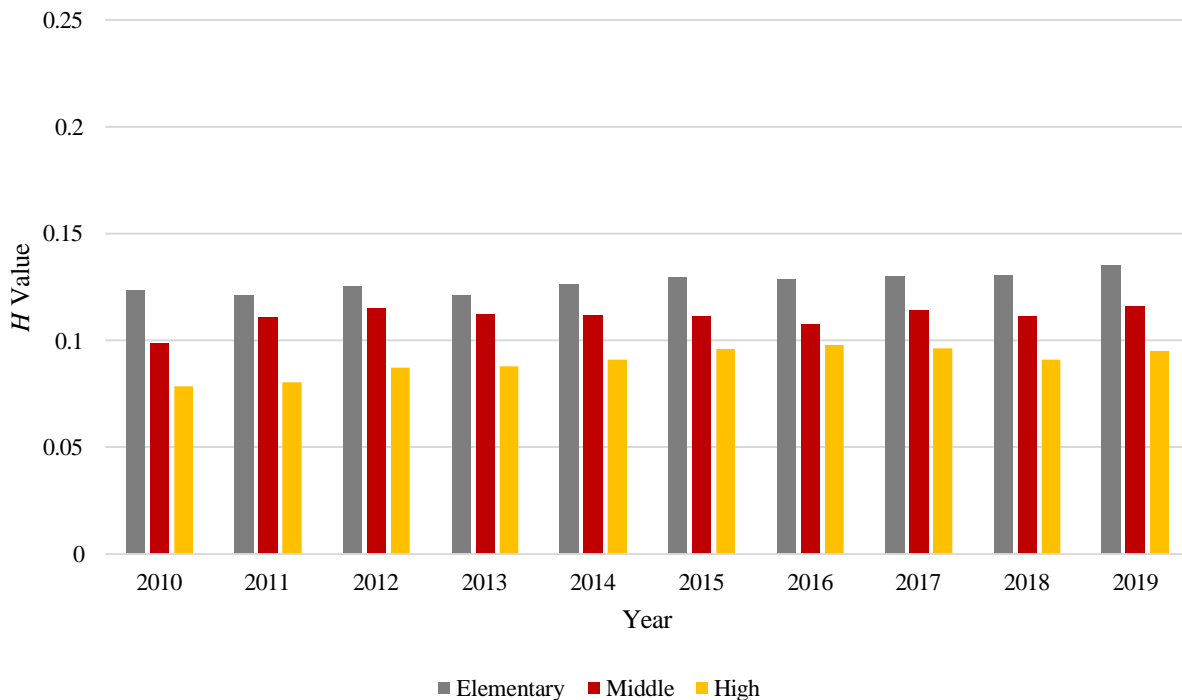
services, ensuring that the curriculum is diverse and inclusive. The SCTA also charges HCPSS to align their budget requests with these desired outcomes.

HCPSS has emphasized increasing graduation rates, in particular. For example, the “Equity Report” presented to the school board and county council in 2019 described several strategies to increase graduation rates. Strategies included identifying students with low attendance rates and offering supports to improve attendance, training staff to more quickly identify students who may be at risk of not graduating in the future, and expanding students’ opportunities to participate in after-school activities by removing funding and transportation barriers.

Despite the equity-oriented values Howard County and HCPSS espoused, and the equity-oriented practices the district engaged in, both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation were growing problems in the county and school system. Between 2010 and 2019—the decade leading up to redistricting—segregation in elementary, middle, and high schools increased both by race/ethnicity (Figure 3; Appendix E; Appendix G) and FRPM status (Figure 4; Appendix, F; Appendix H). Segregation among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian students increased at all school levels during that time period, but was highest and increased the most in elementary schools. Using Reardon and Yun’s (2003) rough heuristic for interpreting H levels, between 2010 and 2019, racial/ethnic segregation remained moderate (between 0.10-0.25) at the elementary and middle school levels and remained low (0-0.10) at the high school level. For example, with regard to elementary school segregation across these groups, H increased from 0.12 in 2010 to 0.14 in 2019. Results from the interaction index (Appendix G) revealed that Asian, Black, and Hispanic students’ exposure to White students decreased over time—an unsurprising finding given that White enrollment had

decreased by about 16% and roughly 6,000 students between 2010 and 2019. Even so, Asian, Black, and Hispanic students were still “over-exposed” to White students, relative to the proportion of White students in the district, in 2019. For example, Black middle schoolers, who had the lowest rates of exposure to White students relative to other racial/ethnic groups and school levels, attended schools that were, on average, 44% White, while White middle school enrollment was only 32%. Overall, this evidence suggests that, although the racial/ethnic distribution of students across HCPSS schools became more even between 2010 and 2019, students attended schools that were relatively racially/ethnically diverse.

Figure 3. *HCPSS School-Level Racial/Ethnic Segregation between 2010 and 2019*

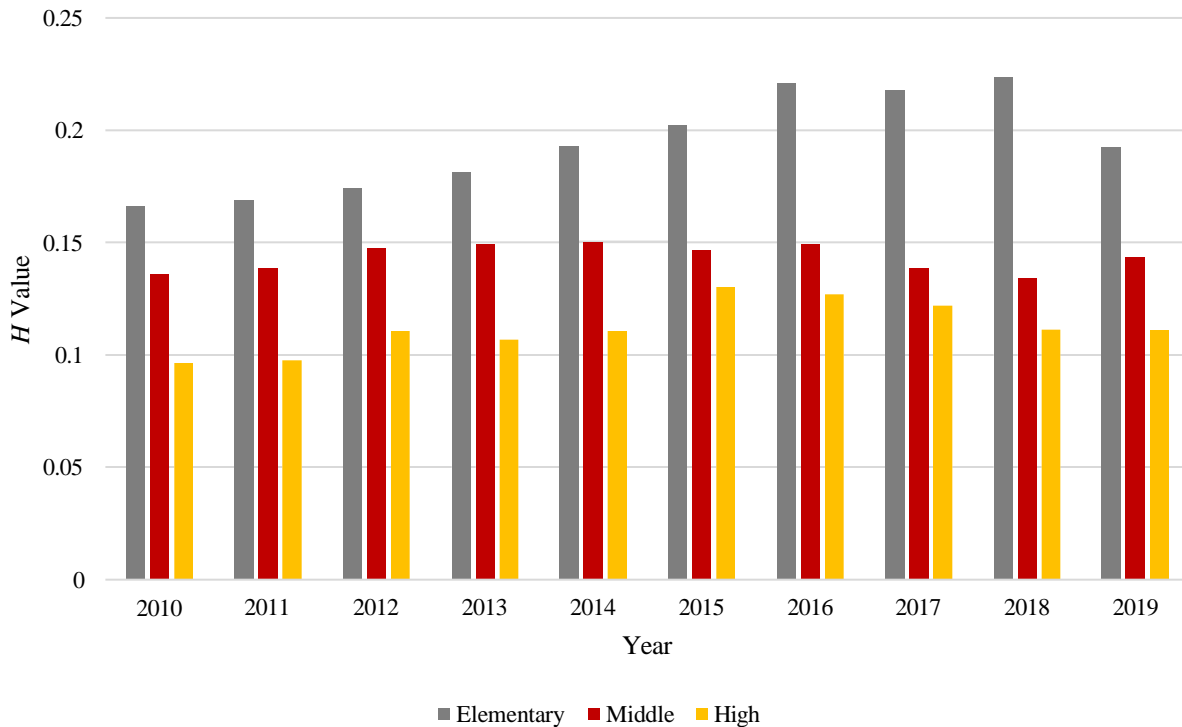


Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

Socioeconomic segregation was higher and increased more than racial/ethnic segregation between 2010 and 2019, particularly at the elementary school level (Figure 4; Appendix F). At all school levels, *H* values measuring the distribution of students receiving and not receiving FRPM were moderate. However, socioeconomic segregation at the elementary school level was

broaching high (0.25-0.40) in the late 2010s: H reached 0.20 in 2015, increased to 0.22 between 2016 and 2018, and dropped back to 0.19 in 2019. Results from the interaction index (Appendix H) revealed that FRPM students’ exposure to non-FRPM students decreased at all school levels in the decade leading up to redistricting. For instance, in 2010, FRPM students attended a school where, on average, 69% of students did not receive FRPM; in 2019, that number had dropped to 63%. Given that the percentage of non-FRPM students in HCPSS in 2019 was approximately 79%, this evidence suggests that FRPM students were exposed to non-FRPM students at disproportionately low rates.

Figure 4. *HCPSS School-Level Socioeconomic Segregation between 2010 and 2019*



Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

Qualitative data also indicated that segregation in Howard County and its school system remained a persistent problem. For example, one community member who responded to the district’s survey of potential attendance boundary adjustments noted “the growing segregation that is taking place in our school system.” Some interview participants also described how

segregation in their neighborhoods had increased over time. For example, one White Oakland Mills resident explained:

We were a much whiter neighborhood when I moved in, and then they target the White families to get them to move. ... It's through the media. It's through the voice of—it's like rumor mill. ... There's all these people telling us stuff that wasn't true about the school before our kids got there, and you see lots of neighbors moving away. They would always say, "Oh, I needed a little bit bigger house." Or they had this reason or that reason, but it was just this fear that was generated.

Additionally, a White participant from the Clemens Crossing neighborhood of Columbia suggested that White families who were districted to predominantly Black and Hispanic, lower-income schools found ways to avoid sending their children those schools. She said,

Our kids walk to Clemens Crossing Elementary, and bus to Wilde Lake Middle School. That's one of the "bad" schools, FYI, right? [laughs]. And we love it. And they [her children] walk to Atholton High School. So two of the more White elementary and high schools. ... My 11th grader is in school at Atholton High School with people whose parents sent them to Catholic school for middle school so that they wouldn't have to go to Wilde Lake.

Overall, these participants suggested that racial/ethnic segregation had increased over time because White families had opted to send their children to predominantly White schools.

Participants discussed socioeconomic segregation more frequently than racial/ethnic segregation. For example, one White parent said that "there's no socioeconomic diversity in some of these schools." She added, "Most schools, FARMs rates are 10% or less, except for a couple which are much higher. ... When it comes to economic diversity, it does not exist."

Another White parent argued that the concentration of poverty on the eastern side of Howard County stood in stark contrast with the county's reputation of being wealthy. In her words:

Howard County has the perception of being a very rich county, and we are. However, we are very disproportionate. ... The distribution is completely skewed, where people that live over here [in the west] have no clue about the poverty over here [in the east].

Some HCPSS students appeared to notice that their schools were segregated, too. For example, a former HCPSS graduate said that she and her brother, both of whom were White, started to recognize the socioeconomic disparities between schools when they transitioned to middle and high school. She explained:

We knew what Title I was from elementary school. ... We knew that meant that there were families in our county who couldn't afford certain things. We would get announcements all the time that were like, "If you're a FARM student, you can get free lunch." ... And then when we got to high school, it was like, "Oh, most of you will probably qualify for free SATs or free college apps because you're in a Title I school and you're FARM students." ... I guess it was pretty normalized. ... It was nice to see that, as a middle-class student—we weren't rich, but we didn't qualify for ... free and reduced meals and stuff—it was nice to see that my peers were getting that. ... Then in high school, we started realizing that, like, "Oh, there are some people [in the county] that just have millions of dollars."

Altogether, quantitative and qualitative data suggested that racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation had become pressing problems for HCPSS in the decade leading up to redistricting. As the following sections explain, these problems did not appear out of thin air; rather, they were created by county and district policies and (in)actions.

Residential Segregation and County Zoning Policies

Many community members thought residential segregation was largely to blame for school segregation. For example, a Black Columbia resident who had lived in the county for decades believed that segregation was “really a matter of housing” and “comes down to where people can live.” Similarly, in an op-ed written for *The Baltimore Sun*, one community member argued that “schools are segregated because housing is” (Baltimore Sun Media, 2019). Several interview participants noted that wealth was concentrated in the western part of the county, while poverty was concentrated in several eastern areas. For example, one White Columbia parent said, simply, “you don’t have low-income families in western Howard County.” Another White parent from eastern Howard County suggested that residents of wealthier areas in the county were unaware that residents in other areas experience poverty. She explained:

The problem you have ... is all the people over here in River Hill, all the people over here in Glenelg, some of the people down here in Reservoir, a lot of the people up in Ellicott City, do not understand the level of poverty in Hammond, Oakland Mills, Elkrigde, Jessup. They do not understand. They have no conception of it. They do not understand how, if you have a school room full of kids that are starving, no learning gets done. When you have—50% of your kids had no preschool education, it’s a lot harder to get through your kindergarten day when this is happening. One half of the community has no understanding of the things that are going on in the other half of the community.

This participant described poverty in Elkrigde by explaining that many students at the school where she serves on the PTA live in motels or affordable housing units through housing voucher programs from the federal government (i.e., Section 8):

We have a number of different students at our elementary school that live in the motels up and down this road. This area right up here is Section 8. ... The rest of the people in the county have no conception of this whatsoever.

Some residents' ignorance of poverty in the county foreshadowed the contentious redistricting process to come. As described in subsequent chapters, many wealthy parents from western Howard County did not think redistricting should be used to desegregate schools, and certainly did not think their communities should be involved in those desegregation attempts.

Other participants described how a concentration of apartments around certain schools led those schools to have high FRPM rates. For example, one White Columbia resident described how the concentration of low-income housing around Bryant Woods Elementary School meant that all students at the school were eligible for free meals under the Community Eligibility Provision of Title I. She said:

Bryant Woods is surrounded by low-income apartments, so it has a high proportion [of low-income students] already. At the time [in 2019], it was the only Community Eligible school, which means it has so many low-income students that it's guaranteed to always be low-income, so it gets extra benefits. Like, every kid gets free lunch, every kid gets free breakfast.

Another Columbia resident, who identified as Black and White, described how concentrations of low-income housing led to higher concentrations of low-income students in Columbia schools as well, particularly Oakland Mills Middle and High Schools and Wilde Lake Middle and High Schools. In her words, "The Oakland Mills area ... the Wilde Lake area, that is where we have ... concentrated areas of poverty, because of the type of housing that's provided. ... Those schools unfortunately will always struggle with higher FARMs rates."

Concentrations of lower- and higher-income housing around certain schools had not occurred by chance, but resulted from many of the county’s development and zoning decisions. As one Black parent from Columbia explained, segregation in HCPSS “had little to do with what people describe as Jim Crow style racism, and more to do with terrible zoning and land use decisions ... to benefit land developers.” In other words, because building single-family homes, which only wealthy people could afford, turned a greater profit, developers prioritized building those homes rather than providing mixed- or low-income housing options—and the county government had allowed them to do so. Indeed, many of these “terrible” (i.e., segregative) zoning policies related to a lack of affordable housing in certain communities—particularly those in the western part of the county, which, as previously described, had limited infrastructure to support high-density housing. For example, one 2019 news article highlighted that “in more recent decades, development in Howard county expanded westward, and newer housing developments did not include many affordable homes” (Goldstein, 2019). A recent graduate of Hammond High School—a predominantly Black and Hispanic school where, in 2019, almost a third of the student body received FRPM—described in an interview how she and her classmates observed the differences in housing options between the eastern and western sides of the county, and attributed those differences to the county’s development decisions. In particular, she believed that the county built specific housing options in specific areas to maintain socioeconomically segregated schools. She compared Hammond High School to Glenelg High School, which was 73% White in 2019 and where just four percent of students received FRPM. She explained:

Me and my friends would go to Dunkin’ and we would drive around those \$6 million house neighborhoods, and we’re like, “Oh my God, I can’t believe they go to our

schools! That's crazy!" ... The way Howard County develops is doing wrong because they'll put low-income housing in Hammond school district, but that those kids stay going to that school, but then they'll build \$6 million homes in Glenelg school district because they want those kids to go there.

One Black parent from southeastern Howard County argued that many efforts to provide affordable housing had fallen flat because wealthier residents—particularly those in Clarksville, a community adjacent to Columbia, have resisted affordable housing being built in their communities. She said:

If someone were to put a low-income housing community in their [wealthier residents'] area, they would push back on that. ... They've done it. A development project will say, will start out with a mix of single-family townhouses or modest-income homes, and then, all of a sudden, it'll shift to even more single-families and lower modest-income homes.

It's happened many times before, especially if it's Clarksville or out west.

Likewise, many other interview participants cited instances where developers had either tried and failed or not even tried to include affordable housing units in new buildings. One Black participant described how affordable housing had been excluded from his community, Maple Lawn, in Fulton, a wealthy section of the county that is predominantly White and Asian. In 2020, the median household income in Fulton was \$170,357 and the median property value was \$637,000 (Data USA, 2020). He explained:

When the Maple Lawn project was first brought forward [to the county], it did not have an affordable housing component. ... It was an intentional county council decision, a zoning board decision, to exempt Greenebaum development from providing a requirement [for affordable housing units]. It was an exemption. They exempted the

developer from doing that. Now, the apartments are expensive. There's one apartment that's very expensive. The single-family homes and the townhouses are very expensive.

A long-time resident of the county explained how these newer, residentially segregated developments indicated how the county, broadly, and Columbia, specifically, had moved away from James Rouse's vision of integration, in part because they want to build high-value housing rather than accommodate residents with varying incomes. In his words:

It's a whirlwind of different reasons and rationales for why we have this problem [segregation], but it really comes down to housing. When I moved here in 1973, I lived in Swansfield [a neighborhood in Columbia] and I rode the bus. I moved in with my aunt and uncle. They lived in a single-family detached home, one of the larger homes in the community at the time, but I rode the bus with kids who lived up the street and lived in the townhouses and lived in multifamily units, and we all went to the same school and we all did things together. That was the Rouse vision of these communities where people of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics would come together in a unified manner to build community. When Jim Rouse got old, sold Rouse company, and then moved on, some of the older folks from Columbia tried to keep that, but others were looking more at capitalistic perspectives of how we make more money.

Thus, over time, development and a desire for economic profit were segregating the county, even in Columbia, where residential integration was both an explicit goal and a design feature.

Many community members cited one of the county's policies—offering developers the opportunity to pay a “fee-in-lieu” rather than build affordable housing units in a development—as a key source of growing residential segregation. In 1996, the Howard County code required developers to provide at least 10% of units at moderate-income prices. Yet, in some parts of the

county, developers could pay a fee rather than build those units. In July 2019, that fee was \$2.65 per square foot (Nocera, 2019c). One White parent from Columbia described how builders use the fee-in-lieu to avoid building affordable housing in western Howard County to make more profit from their developments. She explained:

What I've heard a lot of is that developers have just rejected the low-income [housing] option because they just don't make any money off of it and they are just refusing to do it, and Howard County is one of the few places that seems to be allowing them to make that decision, which is one of the reasons—it's my understanding—that they want to build there. I don't see a lot of effort to put up anything other than very large homes in western Howard County. That's where we [her family] play lacrosse all the time. We're driving out there all the time, and it is huge swaths of land being turned into mini-mansions all around you.

An elected official also recalled where the county “failed” with the Maple Lawn development by allowing the developer to pay the fee-in-lieu. He described that decision as a “mistake” because it allowed developers to build affordable housing in other parts of the county, where it already existed, and allowed Maple Lawn to become one of the “priciest” areas in the county. Interview participants noted that developers had also used the fee-in-lieu to avoid building affordable housing in River Hill—the last village to be built in Columbia in 1991 and an area known for its expensive single-family homes and high-quality schools. Columbia villages established in the mid-20th century, like Oakland Mills, were explicitly designed to include mixed-income housing options. But the developers who built River Hill—and the county officials who approved it—appeared to have different priorities. The elected official who explained the failures of the Maple Lawn development described how a similar deal between developers and the county happened

when building River Hill. As a result, he said, there is virtually no affordable housing in that village. One White interview participant who lived in River Hill acknowledged this reality, and blamed the residential segregation in River Hill on the county's decision to exempt developers from providing affordable housing there. She said:

I blame the county council on part of this [segregation]. ... When they planned River Hill, whoever approved the land use, they never pushed for a diverse type of housing. ... By not requiring a diverse type of housing, then they caused this problem [segregation] on their own. Had they zoned neighborhoods for more townhouses and more apartments in River Hill ... it wouldn't have been as bad as it is. I feel like they created a monster of their own.

Another White Columbia resident described how wealth was also concentrated in River Hill. She explained: "River Hill, ... yeah, that's Columbia. But, you know, River Hill is the last village built, and it has no socioeconomic diversity. They [developers] didn't put any socioeconomic diversity there."

While community members were most often the ones describing housing policy as a source of segregation, a few elected officials also recognized the relationship between residential and school segregation and acknowledged their responsibility to address segregative housing policies and development patterns. For example, one state-level elected official said that the "real issue" with school segregation is the lack of mixed-income housing options in all areas of the county. Similarly, in a joint meeting of the school board and county council in 2019, council chair Christiana Mercer Rigby suggested that the county would work on addressing socioeconomic inequality across schools by working on "housing affordability" (6/24/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting). In another joint meeting, councilmember

David Yungmann, who represented western Howard County, said that the socioeconomic segregation of schools “is all on county government.” He elaborated: “your [FRPM] numbers reflect the housing types and the development that county government has put in your hands, so I think we [councilmembers] are all committed to turning that ship in a different direction” (9/23/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

Several interview participants also noted that residential segregation was not a standalone problem, but one that was linked with school overcrowding. Generally, participants suggested that schools surrounded by high-density housing options like apartments—which were often home to low-income families—were overcrowded. A Black participant from Columbia who had served in many advisory roles for the school district explained this relationship clearly:

The schools that are overcrowded are also the schools where people who cannot afford to buy a four- or five-bedroom home on a three to five-acre lot end up living, in the eastern part of the county. You have more low- and moderate-income housing on the east side of the county, and the schools are overcrowded, and yes, you have kids with needs just by virtue of their economic level. That creates an imbalance in terms of the number of students on free and reduced meals.

One participant who lived on the southeastern side of the county explained the relationship between segregation and overcrowding at Long Reach High School, which serves high percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students, and was projected to be at around 111% capacity utilization in 2019. She said:

Long Reach has a very high population of not-so-well-to-do people, because that’s where ... apartments that, I think, are managed by the county or under some type of funding in that way [are located]. They may have more of a subsidized type thing going on right

around Long Reach. There's a lot of apartments in that space. Therefore, it probably would be [overcrowded] based on the fact that those apartments would have more kids in that school.

Quantitative data revealed this pattern in other HCPSS schools as well. For example, in 2019, Bryant Woods Elementary School was 54% Black and 13% Hispanic, with 43% of students receiving FRPM. The district projected Bryant Woods to be at approximately 120% capacity that year. Similarly, Talbott Springs Elementary Schools, which was 40% Black, 28% Hispanic, and had a FRPM rate of 49%, was projected to be at approximately 123% capacity in 2019. Yet, the relationship between segregation and overcrowding did not hold for all schools. Some schools that served high percentages Black, Hispanic, and low-income students, including Swansfield Elementary School and Oakland Mills High School, had long been under-enrolled. As the following section explains, HCPSS had used prior redistricting decisions (or lack thereof) and other educational policies to keep schools like these segregated and under-enrolled.

Segregative Educational Policies

While many community members and elected officials attributed segregation to the county's housing policies, other factors contributed to segregation as well. As council chair Christiana Mercer Rigby said at a joint meeting with the school board, "it's not simply housing types that give you less than 50 students at one school while a neighboring school has more than 500 students on free and reduced meals" (9/23/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting). Indeed, qualitative data suggested that several of HCPSS's policies and prior redistricting decisions also contributed to school segregation. For example, many interview participants indicated that the prior superintendent had implemented a policy that aimed to provide high-poverty schools with additional resources rather than desegregating them—a

strategy employed since the 20th century to maintain segregated schools and districts (Ryan, 2010). An Asian Elkridge resident who was a long-time resident of the county recalled how the prior superintendent, Renee Foose, turned to her “concentrated poverty plan” in 2014 because community members were upset with a redistricting plan that the prior superintendent—Sydney Cousin, who was the district’s first Black superintendent—had proposed. She explained:

Cousin, before he retired, had put a redistricted plan together. That was for, I think it was elementary and middle. ... It was really going to improve equity. ... Whenever Foose arrived, that plan was on the table. Then, the loud screamers got a hold of her and she shelved the plan and went to a concentrated poverty plan.

This participant further described Foose’s plan in the following way:

“Let’s concentrate on poverty. We get to Title I status and then we’ll get the extra resources and we can put them into the schools.” I think that was her strategy, and I didn’t approve of it. I don’t think that’s the way to do it. I want fully integrated communities and fully integrated school systems. We don’t have it here. We really don’t.

A White Elkridge resident described Foose’s approach similarly. She said:

Foose’s idea was, if we put all the poor kids in one school, we can concentrate our efforts and funds for those schools. In theory, okay, sure, whatever. Then, more poverty came, and more poverty came, and now it’s too much to handle. They need to disperse some of that.

The policy that Foose implemented was called the Elementary School Model (ESM), which the district introduced at five elementary schools with high FRPM rates during the 2014-2015 school year: four schools in Columbia—Bryant Woods, Talbott Springs, Running Brook, and Steven’s Forest—as well as Laurel Woods, located in the southeastern part of the county. The policy

provided these five schools with several new programs, including full-day prekindergarten and world language instruction from prekindergarten to fifth grade. One White Oakland Mills parent had a child attending Steven’s Forest Elementary School when ESM was implemented there. She said of the policy:

Honestly, it was the first time that I can remember HCPSS ... concentrate a large chunk of money to a program designed to address equity. Because it was a large program. It was millions of dollars to implement. And, you know, there were people that didn’t like the fact that it took money from other places in the budget.

Yet, the ESM did not last for long. When Foose retired from the district in 2017, the school board removed the program from all five elementary schools. The Steven’s Forest parent recalled the board’s reversal:

They [the board] pulled it out [of the budget]. And so, once they pull it out of the budget, and they don’t send it to the county executive, it can’t be done. ... There was no talk about it being pulled, they just, it was just, “budget time, we needed to balance the budget, so, sorry!” So, they pulled the ESM. ... It’s just, like, that’s the story of the schools that have high-poverty rates. They’re just not prioritized, in any way, in anything in HCPSS.

In sum, while this participant viewed the ESM as one of the few instances where HCPSS had explicitly provided funding to under-resourced schools, the policy was ultimately one that upheld segregation.

Interview participants described how, in addition to the ESM model, prior HCPSS redistricting decisions had contributed to segregation as well. Thus, redistricting was not necessarily a *desegregation* policy, but, as other studies have indicated (e.g., Siegel-Hawley,

2013), one that could be used to perpetuate or increase *segregation*. Several participants believed that HCPSS had redistricted with the intent to segregate students by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, or, at the very least, to maintain segregation and, in the words of one Oakland Mills resident, avoid “rocking the boat too much.” This theme was particularly salient for Oakland Mills residents. For example, one White Oakland Mills resident said: “I think that, historically, redistricting—especially since, like, 2005—was always to try to increase the segregation. I think they always had to adjust to the changing demographics. Otherwise, it would’ve actually gotten more integrated.” He further described how HCPSS’s past redistricting decisions had maintained socioeconomic segregation between Oakland Mills and Howard High School: “There’s lots of neighborhoods that are close to Oakland Mills, that are equally close to Oakland Mills and Howard. If they’re wealthy, they go to Howard, even though it’s full. If they’re low-income, they go to Oakland Mills.” Another White Oakland Mills resident agreed that prior redistricting decisions contributed to school segregation. He explained:

There were a lot of kids in Howard County ... who were not going to their nearest school because of past [redistricting] decisions. ... Right here in my community, there was an apartment complex literally across the street from the nearest elementary school, and they were going to one [school] almost a mile away. ... And there were plenty of other kids throughout the county not necessarily going to their nearest school ... because of past redistricting decisions that left some of those schools a lot wealthier than other schools. And, you know, things probably would have been more balanced if they were going to their neighborhood school.

And yet another Oakland Mills resident argued that prior redistricting decisions had also led to gradual increases in the FRPM rates at schools in Oakland Mills. She said:

My kids are at the, all three schools with the highest number of kids receiving free and reduced meals. And every redistricting that happened prior to 2016, when they would redistrict, we would slowly, our FARMs rate would slowly start to go up, because we were just sort of like an afterthought. It wasn't like they [the district and the school board] focused on us, and what can we do to make this school better? It was like, "Oh well, somebody's got to get the raw end of the deal." You know, that's what it felt like. "Somebody's got to get the raw end of the deal so it'll just be Oakland Mills.

These comments suggested that, while "neighborhood schools" have often been associated with segregation, sending HCPSS students to their closest schools, in some instances, may have actually been less segregative than HCPSS's alternative plans.

Several interview participants expressed frustration with the 2017-2018 redistricting effort, in particular. For example, one White Oakland Mills parent described how, in 2017, she and others in her neighborhood advocated for redistricting to more evenly distribute low-income students across elementary schools in their area. Yet, none of the proposed redistricting plans adequately addressed socioeconomic segregation, and, as previously described, few students were redistricted in the end. In her words:

When they first put that plan out [in 2017], one of the things that we [in Oakland Mills] said was, "we have three elementary schools that feed into our middle school in Oakland Mills. We've got Thunder Hill, who is at, like, 20-something percent free and reduced meals; Talbott Springs that's at, like, 45 percent or something, and then Steven's Forest, at the time, I think it was like 60-some percent. ... It's not fair that you have a classroom full of high-needs kids, and you're expected to meet them all at the level they are, when you know there are schools that have two high-needs kids. So we really wanted them [the

district and school board] to look at our area and kind of like, split it up. ... But the plan that they had put together in 2017 sent them [Steven's Forest students receiving FRPM] all back to Talbott Springs, and it made Talbott Springs 70 percent free and reduced meals. ... We were like, "we're not trying to flip the burden, we're trying to even it out so that everybody gets what they need." ... At that point, it was sort of like, "they do not care." Like, if they put that plan together, put it out in the public, they must be okay with it.

Additionally, a White Elkridge resident suggested that the 2017 redistricting decision led one elementary school in Elkridge, Ducketts Lane, to receive a Title I designation. She said, "redistricting happened, and then it became a Title I school because they moved parts out, and then it was a very high percentage of students receiving FARMs." According to NCES CCD data, Ducketts Lane had an FRPM rate of approximately 44 percent in 2019. At a 2019 meeting, school board member Vicky Cutroneo also acknowledged how the board's 2017 redistricting decision led Ducketts Lane's to become a Title I school. She suggested to her fellow board members that it was "very important to have FARMs data" when considering redistricting options in 2019, given that the board's prior redistricting decision had made a non-Title I school a Title I school (10/28/19 Board of Education meeting).

Educational Inequities and Other Forms of Racism

One of the most prominent themes in qualitative data was the educational inequality stemming from racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation and other forms of racism in Howard County and HCPSS. One Asian interview participant described the county's diversity as its greatest strength and said that the district is "working very, very hard on the equity part" and "trying to break down the doors and the barriers," but acknowledged that "the inclusion part, for

many communities, is still elusive.” Participants often described how inequities manifested in HCPSS as disparate opportunities among schools, even though the school system paints all schools as equal. For example, a White participant from Elkridge explained:

The school system’s trying to give this—they try to give this, “we’re a countywide school system. All the schools are the same.” They give you that BS, because it’s not true. ... They’re saying that, but everybody else realizes, okay, really, all the schools aren’t quite the same. You do have some opportunities in some schools that you don’t in others. They want to have a “countywide system,” but they haven’t achieved it yet.

In short, even a diverse district that espouses commitments to equity was not immune to the educational resource and opportunity gaps that plague districts nationwide.

Qualitative data pointed to disparities in various resources, including the quality and experience-level of teachers, school facilities, and funding. For example, Sabina Taj, a school board member who often shed light on inequities in the district and pushed her colleagues to prioritize addressing them, discussed “opportunity gaps” between schools in several meetings. She frequently discussed how schools with higher FRPM rates typically employed less experienced teachers than schools with lower FRPM rates. Others discussed these disparities as well. In a public hearing that the county council held related to redistricting, a former HCPSS teacher spoke about how the low-income schools she worked at had higher teacher burnout and turnover rates, which often led to a teaching staff that was less experienced. Likewise, a parent who responded to the district’s survey of potential attendance boundaries, whose daughter attended Oakland Mills High School (OMHS), wrote that many of the “invested” teachers had left to work in “better” schools; as a result, in her view, “There are far fewer teachers in the

school that are there for the OMHS kids, most are counting their days to a transfer. *They say it out loud to the kids in class!*”

Many participants—especially those who attended or had children who attended low-income schools in Columbia—described disparities in school facilities. For instance, one White Oakland Mills parent shared that the district was “always delaying the construction, always delaying the remodeling in the low-income areas.” He added, “the light bulbs didn’t even work at Oakland Mills.” A White former HCPSS student described similar facility issues at Hammond High School, from which she graduated. She explained:

Our building just needed to be renovated. I think it was set to be renovated in 1996, and it just kept getting pushed, and pushed, and pushed, and finally, this year they started renovating it. ... Our school is the oldest one in the county. It was falling apart.

When asked how, exactly, the school was “falling apart,” she elaborated:

We had broken stuff for years. ... We have all the little flyers next to every water fountain that’s like, “This has not been tested for lead.” ... It was next to every sink. ... Our school was a joke almost. We [Hammond students] bonded over how little resources we got.

A 2019 news article about renovations for Hammond documented similar frustrations from others in the Hammond community. One parent, who had long advocated for the renovations said, “To say we’ve felt forgotten by the school system is an understatement. ... The whole county wants to talk about equity ... and the fact that we have a school being left like this ... why is one of the poorest schools being treated this way?” (Nocera, 2019k). The Hammond graduate I interviewed also suggested that Oakland Mills High School had the same struggles with facilities and resources as her former school did. To her, the disparities between these

schools and wealthier schools in western Howard County became clear when traveling for school sporting events:

I played softball my freshman year, and their [Oakland Mills'] fields were just as messed up as ours. Their softball field, their dugouts were all falling apart. There were holes in them. It was raining that day, and we were all just getting soaked because they didn't actually cover anything. When we would go to play in western Howard County, it was gorgeous. They had a million fields, too. Hammond and Oakland Mills only had one. It's very clear when you can see the equity differences between every school.

An Oakland Mills parent described how he witnessed similar disparities between the athletic equipment at OMHS and at wealthier schools in the county. He explained:

They [wealthier schools] get a lot of donations for things like sports and musicals and things like that, but you can't get a lot of donations for a low-income school. I know Oakland Mills, my kids were on the track team and they used to use hurdles that said "Reservoir High School." I'm like, "why do the hurdles say Reservoir High School? None of them match. They are different versions." The coaches are like, "Reservoir High School gets new hurdles every two years and we get the old ones. We buy them from them." They still have to pay.

He also described how Oakland Mills had to reuse other schools' band equipment: "They got their drums in their band from some other schools that got rid of them. They buy everything used. ... It's pretty clear funding is not equal." Overall, these comments illustrated the disparities wealthy and lower-income schools in Howard County—namely, between western and eastern Howard County schools—which largely stemmed from segregation.

Many participants specifically discussed disparities in access to funding beyond that which came from the district and the state—including PTA budgets, donations, and fundraising. Disparities like these are common between schools serving wealthy and lower-income students, and even within schools that are socioeconomically diverse, and often reproduce inequitable access to educational resources and opportunities (Cucchiara, 2017; Posey-Maddox, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2014). For instance, an ElkrIDGE resident who served on her daughter’s school’s PTA described how some PTAs in western Howard County schools had budgets that doubled (or more than doubled) their own:

Our PTA budget for our school is \$30,000 for the year and it’s not nearly enough for what we need. ... A lot of our money goes to teachers for classroom supplies. ... Some of the PTAs in the west, their budget is \$60,000 to \$80,000 to \$100,000. It’s crazy mad money. When we ask for donations, we get a gift basket from Heavy Seas Brewing Company, but over at Centennial, people will donate their timeshares and the bids are crazy. It’s a different—two different worlds.

Similarly, a long-time Howard County resident recalled when River Hill High School raised money to put lights on their football field, but ultimately could not install them because the county executive at the time stopped it in an effort to prevent further inequities in facilities between HCPSS schools. He explained:

Several years ago, the parents at a school, River Hill High School ... the Parent Boosters Club raised money to put lights on their football field. ... They had raised the money. They were going to put lights on the football field. Ken Ulman was the county executive at the time, and Ken said, “No, we’re going to stop this, because River Hill is going to get the lights when Oakland Mills can get the lights. Until we can get lights in all of the

schools, we're not going to have lights in any schools." That's the kind of mentality that happens in certain schools, where parents can afford to put their children in these programs that allow them to go to Disney World for band and be in concerts and things, when you have other schools where kids don't even have instruments to learn to play.

The former county executive's actions were perhaps surprising, given that district officials who try to place guardrails on fundraising and spending inequities between schools often face political backlash and risk wealthy parents leaving or disinvesting in their school or district (Posey-Maddox, 2014). Like the former county executive, other district and county officials also appeared to recognize funding disparities between schools. For instance, in one joint meeting between the county council and school board, councilmember Deb Jung shared concerns about her children attending high-poverty schools because she had observed so many differences in financial and non-financial resources. She provided the example of one elementary school that raised \$16,000 in gift cards to give teachers around the holidays, which stood in stark contrast with what some other schools were capable of acquiring through community donations (1/13/20 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

In addition to resource disparities between schools, many interview participants—especially Black parents—discussed the prevalence of racism in HCPSS and how it affected their children's educational experiences. As one Black parent whose two children had graduated from or were currently enrolled in HCPSS explained, "We have a school system that is incapable of addressing gaps in education based on race and whether English is your first language. They're just not very good with it." This parent also described how, in Howard County, "There's still a lot of people of Color who are unseen and unheard, who are being seen as something other than just a person who wants a good life." Similarly, an Asian parent described how Howard County

“is just as racist as anywhere else.” Another Black parent who was a long-time resident of the county believed that racism in Howard County reflected racism nationally, saying, “This community is in America, and it’s a microcosm of all that’s going on in America.”

Many Black parents discussed how some HCPSS teachers and administrators, as well as non-Black community members, made racist assumptions about their children’s academic capabilities—assumptions that often required these parents to spend extra time and energy advocating for their children to get the education they deserved. As one Black participant explained, “I’ve heard this from some of the long-time Black families in the county that have felt like, yes, my child has gotten a good education, but I’ve had to stay on the schools for fairness and equity.” Black participants provided several examples of racist assumptions about their children and the extra effort they put in to combat them. For example, one Black parent explained how others in the district have assumed that her youngest child, who is high-achieving, was low-achieving because she is Black:

My issue is that my youngest child is high-achieving, and nobody cares about that because they think that if she goes over to their school that she’s going to, in fact, look like she’s bringing their numbers down. ... The assumption is, because she’s Brown, that she’s a FARMs student and she’s getting help because her mother doesn’t make enough money or her family doesn’t care about education. To me, that’s disheartening in this day and age, but that’s the reality.

This parent also explained the effort she put in to make sure the district provided her children with what she perceived was a quality education. She explained:

A lot of us grew up where we didn’t have to do much to get our education except to show up at school. Here [in Howard County], that’s not the case. I know that my kids received

a better education because I would show up to the school. ... If you're not seen, you don't get the same education. Your child has to learn how to advocate for themselves.

She also described how not all parents in Howard County had the ability to go the extra mile to hold the school system accountable, which compounded existing inequities:

If your parents are working two jobs and don't come home except for to take care of you, they don't have time for the meetings [at the school]. The school thinks they don't care because they're not at meetings. Meetings are during the times when they can't be there. If I get called right now, I hang up on the phone from you and show up to school. I'm two minutes away. Everybody doesn't have that opportunity.

Another Black parent also described how HCPSS staff repeatedly assumed his child was low-achieving because he is Black. His experience ultimately led him to recognize that racism was a "systemic problem" in the district. He said:

My wife is a retired educator, and she forced me to go to school for American Education Week to observe my son. In that observation, she taught me to identify his class placement. In elementary school, you only change one class, and that's math. He was in the lowest math class, even though she was an elementary school teacher in the county. We had a conversation with the teachers, move him to the middle of the three [math] buckets. He does well that year. I go back the next year ... and I observe the same thing. Have a conversation with the teachers, move him back to the middle, he does great. The beautiful thing that year was my wife saved every paper, every quiz, everything he had ever done. Then, at the end of the school year, we also put him in a private school for summer for enrichment. Go back the next year. Guess what? He's back in the lowest math class. ... I ask the principal how this happens. She explains. I pull out a folder with

all the documentation, and it was unrefutable [*sic*]. That made me realize that, apart from my being there, apart from my wife being an educator and telling me what to look for, my son would have stayed in this lowest math class because there wouldn't have been anyone to advocate for him to be challenged.

Ultimately, this experience led this participant to start “advocating not just for my son, but for Black children as a whole, because I realized this was a systemic problem and it wasn't just at this one school.”

A few Black participants shared that Black families' experiences with racism in HCPSS led them to move to predominantly Black areas in the county or to leave the county altogether. For example, one Black parent said:

I know some parents who chose to move to Black areas because they didn't want it [racism in their children's schools]. ... I guess the big thing for a lot of people now is their children going to school and not seeing people that look like them.

She further explained how it was important for her and many other Black families to send their children to schools that had Black teachers, adding that she thought schools in the western part of the county are less likely to employ teachers of Color than schools in the eastern part of the county. In her words:

I would like for my child to experience having Black teachers, and I don't know if you're going to see that in the other schools [in western Howard County]. ... My oldest daughter only had maybe two Black teachers from 2005 to 2013. My youngest, on the other side, did not know that there was such a thing as to not have a Black teacher, which is great. ... Her very first teacher was Black. You're not going to have every teacher be Black, but

it's nice to see somebody that looks a little different. We still have a lot of spaces where teachers don't always know how to deal with children of Color and you can see that.

Another Black parent shared the story of a Black family who had left the district after experiencing racism in HCPSS, even though they had moved to Howard County specifically for its schools:

They [the Black family] felt that their children were facing racial discrimination. ... Their children were one of the few children of Color in the school. They decided to put their children in private school and move out of the county and move closer to where the private school is. They told me the only reason they moved here was for the school system, so there was no need to stay.

Overall, these comments suggest that, in some ways, racially/ethnically diverse schools did not provide the educational opportunities that some Black parents wanted for their children; their children may have been more exposed to racism in schools with fewer Black students and may have also had fewer Black teachers in those schools. Like many critical studies of desegregation (e.g., Horsford, 2010; Morris, 2008), this evidence reveals the complicated nature of desegregation as a policy to advance educational equity, particularly because some families of Color value the environments and experiences of schools with high percentages of students of Color.

Interviews and documentary data suggested that racism was a particularly egregious problem at schools in western Howard County. For example, a White Columbia resident recalled several racist incidents that occurred at Glenelg High School, which was about 73% White in 2019. She explained how the school had posted a photo to social media of several students wearing what she perceived to be racist and disrespectful shirts on Indigenous Peoples' Day:

“one had a Redskins [football team] shirt on, on Indigenous Peoples’ Day, and one had a Trump shirt on. And they [school administrators] tweeted that out!” This participant also recalled instances where Glenelg students had “brought the Confederate flag to a Wilde Lake game, which happened all the time.” She viewed this act as racist because Wilde Lake High School, a school in Columbia, has a high percentage of Black students. In addition to these incidents, Glenelg was the center of scandal in 2018 after four White students vandalized their campus with swastikas and racist, homophobic, and anti-Semitic slurs, including one directed at their principal, who is Black. A year later, the four students were convicted of a hate crime and sentenced to community service and as many as 18 weekends in jail (Contrera, 2019; Nocera, 2019b). One Black participant suggested that these and other examples of racism in western Howard County have made Black families hesitant to send their children to those schools: “If a child who is Black ends up at a western Howard County school and they start seeing n-word this or any of that, their families are not going to advocate for them to go to these schools.”

Institutional Structures, Procedures, and Values

Whereas contextual factors created the conditions, or problems, that HCPSS needed to resolve—and, ultimately, chose to resolve through redistricting—systemic factors, including the district’s structure, procedures, and values—set the parameters around how the district could address those problems and motivated them to do so. These factors had the potential to support *or* constrain efforts to desegregate through redistricting.

Structure and Procedures

Three institutions, or political systems, played a role in HCPSS’s 2019-2020 redistricting effort: the Howard County Public School System, the Howard County Board of Education, and the Howard County Council. The following sections describe the structure and procedures

relevant to redistricting for each institution, with particular attention to how structures and procedures shaped institutions' power over redistricting.

School District Structure and Procedures

As previously described, HCPSS is a countywide school system, which means that it serves students across all of Howard County. The district enrolled 58,629 students in 2019, making it substantially larger than the plurality of districts in the U.S. (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). Because the district is so geographically large, it serves students from high-density areas like Columbia—which accounts for roughly a third of the county's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023)—as well as students from low-density areas in the rural western part of the county. Geographic diversity contributes to the district's demographic diversity, which, as explained earlier in this chapter, has grown in recent years.

To enhance the efficiency of redistricting efforts in such a large district, in the early 2000s, HCPSS developed a “polygon” system. According to the district, “a polygon is a geographical area with existing and projected housing and student data for purposes of [school attendance] boundary reviews” (Howard County Public School System, n.d.[a]). In other words, polygons group residences (e.g., apartment buildings, single-family homes) together into a single unit; students whose houses are located in the same polygon attend the same school. Polygons often align with neighborhood boundary lines, but in denser areas, a single neighborhood may be dissected into multiple polygons. For example, one interview participant from the southeastern part of the county explained how HCPSS had divided her neighborhood into two separate polygons: one that included single-family homes and another that included townhomes. In her view, creating separate polygons by home type also created separate polygons by socioeconomic status. She said:

Your neighborhood could be a polygon, but it could also ... be two neighborhoods in a polygon, or it could be one half of a neighborhood. ... You could walk half a mile down the road and it's a new polygon in our neighborhood. Even though I would say our neighborhood would have very modest single-family homes in addition to townhouses that would be more middle class, lower middle class, those townhouses are not included in our polygon. We are a polygon strictly of single-family homes.

The district last reviewed its polygon system in 2007. At that point, HCPSS staff sought to create polygons that had 100 or fewer students, although some remained larger. The review resulted in approximately 700 polygons across the district (Howard County Public School System, n.d.).

The district uses these polygons when redistricting; rather than redrawing attendance boundaries around individual residences, they redraw boundaries around polygons.

HCPSS's redistricting process is governed by Policy 6010, entitled "School Attendance Areas," defined as the geographic areas from which a school's students are drawn. The purpose of Policy 6010 was "to define the conditions and process by which school attendance area adjustments will be developed and adopted." The policy is accompanied by implementation procedures, which provide a timeline of redistricting processes and a description of how HCPSS will implement redistricting plans that the school board votes into effect. The policy states that the Howard County Board of Education may initiate a redistricting process when one or more of six conditions exist: 1) a new school or an addition to an existing school is scheduled to open; 2) an existing school is closed; 3) projections for school capacity utilization are beyond the target range; 4) the program capacity of a school is changed; 5) the road networks within an attendance area are changed; or 6) a "unique circumstance" prompts attendance area adjustments to "promote efficiencies, provide for the welfare of students, or adapt for shifts in program

delivery.” To monitor school capacity utilization projections, HCPSS conducts an annual Feasibility Study, which provides the district and school board with information about projected school enrollment and capacity utilization for the upcoming year. The stated goals of the Feasibility Study included informing HCPSS’s long-term planning process and preparing for future school attendance boundary adjustments (Howard County Public School System, 2019a).

Policy 6010 states that the superintendent, school board, and Attendance Area Committee—a group of community members who provide input to the superintendent—must consider three factors when developing a redistricting plan. The first factor is facility utilization, which the policy suggests should remain within the district’s target range of 90-110%. When determining facility utilization, actors may consider how efficiently a school space is being used, a school’s long-term enrollment projections, whether a school houses a special program that draws students from outside their assigned attendance area, how many students walk or are bused to a school, and the distance and time bused students travel to a school. The second factor is community stability, which may involve (a) sending students who live in the same neighborhood to the same school, and/or (b) sending students who attend one school together (e.g., an elementary school) to another school together (e.g., a middle school). This portion of the policy also specifies that the board should minimize how often students are redistricted by attempting not to move a student more than once every five years. The third and final factor is demographic diversity. This factor involves “promot[ing] the creation of a diverse and inclusive student body” by considering several demographic characteristics, including: the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic (as measured by FRPM participation) composition of schools sending and receiving students; the standardized test scores of students at sending and receiving schools; and the number of English learners at sending and receiving schools.

The policy acknowledges that “while each of these factors will be considered, it may not be feasible to reconcile each and every school attendance area adjustment with each and every factor.” Essentially, this clause gives the superintendent, school board, and AAC the freedom to prioritize one or two factors over others while still staying within the policy’s bounds. Once redistricting is initiated, the superintendent submits a recommended attendance area adjustment that considers the aforementioned factors to the school board, who may choose to proceed with the superintendent’s recommendation, modify the recommendation, or pursue an entirely different plan (Howard County Public School System, 2019a).

Additionally, Policy 6010 allows the school board to consider exemptions from redistricting for different student groups. In short, exemptions allow students whose polygons are redistricted to remain at their current school. The policy specifies that redistricting decisions will not affect rising seniors, for instance, but also suggests that the board may consider exempting rising fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade students.

The policy also sets parameters around community involvement in the redistricting process. First, it provides guidance for community input in general. For example, it requires the school board to offer opportunities for public input on redistricting and allows community members to submit their own redistricting plans to the board or superintendent. Second, it specifies the role of the Attendance Area Committee (AAC). The superintendent appoints community members to the AAC, which provides input on redistricting plans presented in the Feasibility Study and developed by the superintendent. The policy’s implementation procedures state that the AAC consists of 10 to 15 individuals who represent five different regions of the county; the committee may also include a member of the Howard County Associated of Student Councils, residents of areas likely to be affected by attendance boundary adjustments, and up to

six members of previous years' committees. The board changed the role of the AAC prior to redistricting in 2019. During the 2017 redistricting process, the AAC developed their own redistricting proposal and received input about it from the public. AAC members in 2017 reported harassment from community members; in response, the district and school board changed Policy 6010 in 2018 to prohibit members of the general public from participating in AAC meeting and contacting AAC members about their roles. One interview participant whose friend was on the 2017 AAC described what happened when the committee proposed their redistricting plan: "The community finds out who's on the AAC, sends them death threats, doxxes them, tortures their lives, and makes it a position that nobody ever wants to be in." She also described how, in response to that harassment, the district and school board made the AAC more of a symbolic than substantive committee: "What they did is they said, "we're going to handpick a couple of people, we're going to give them the [superintendent's redistricting] plan, we want them to rubber stamp it, and then where going to put it out to the county."

The superintendent, school board, and HCPSS's Office of School Planning also discussed modifying Policy 6010 in early 2019, but only implemented minor wording changes. However, board members discussed several changes—namely, giving weights to the three different priorities the policy outlines: school capacity utilization, community stability, and school diversity. The Office of School Planning shared that the 2016 school board discussed assigning weights to these three criteria, which would require the board to prioritize them in a particular way, but that board chose not to assign weights because "priorities might change." Board member Chao Wu pushed heavily to weight criteria because, in his words, "there will always be a conflict of considerations, so we will continue to argue about it." Board member Jen Mallo, who was on the 2016 school board, responded to Wu by saying that the board "wanted to

emphasize balance” across the three criteria “while realizing that goals might be higher in some cases and lower in others” (2/28/19 Board of Education meeting). Several interview participants also observed that, in the words of one Oakland Mills parent, “There’s no weighted criteria in the policy.” Another Oakland Mills parent described how the three criteria in Policy 6010 can be contradictory. He explained:

If you take everything [in Policy 6010] literally, and you hold all else equal, the policy does start to contradict itself in a way. If you want socioeconomic balance, you may not be able to achieve capacity balance. If you want capacity balance, you may not be able to achieve socioeconomic [balance].

In short, several board members and community members acknowledged that the three redistricting priorities outlined in Policy 6010 may come into conflict with one another as the board deliberates potential attendance area adjustments. These comments foreshadowed the contentious political dynamics that characterized the initiation and enactment phases of the 2019-2020 redistricting process.

School Board Structure and Procedures

Under Policy 6010, the school board has the most power to influence the redistricting process. While the superintendent has the power to select AAC members and present a recommended redistricting plan to the board, the board has the power to decide what plan to enact, if any. But the school board’s structure and procedures, particularly those related to school board elections, also granted more power to community members in some parts of the county than those in others. In 2019, the Howard County school board had eight seats: seven for elected members and one for a student member. At the time, school board members (excluding the student member) were elected at-large, meaning they ran to represent the whole county, rather

than particular county council districts. While the county overall is racially/ethnically diverse, diversity within its five council districts vary. District 1, which covers most of the eastern side of the county, is predominantly White and Asian, although approximately 12% of constituents are Black. District 2, which includes communities on the eastern side of the county as well as some villages on the eastern side of Columbia, is more racially/ethnically diverse: roughly 40% of its constituents are White, about a quarter are Black, 17% are Asian, and approximately 12% are Hispanic. District 3, which includes some Columbia villages and parts of southeastern Howard County, is also racially/ethnically diverse: about a third of constituents are White, about a third are Black, roughly 14% are Asian, and approximately 12% are Hispanic. District 4, which includes some villages in Columbia and a few communities in western Howard County is, like District 1, predominantly White and Asian, but approximately 21% of constituents are Black. District 5, which covers the rural, western part of the county, has the highest percentage of White constituents (63%) and a relatively large population of Asian constituents (22%) (Maryland Department of Planning, 2020).

Many interview participants argued that the at-large school board election system privileged predominantly White and Asian districts while marginalizing diverse districts, where more Black and Hispanic residents live. For decades, scholars have considered the benefits and drawbacks of city- or county-wide versus district-based elections. For example, in his seminal book, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (1974), David Tyack suggests that battles over city-wide versus ward governance systems trace back to the 19th century. While some politicians and communities argued that city-wide systems were more representative and efficient, others argued that ward systems offered more opportunity for “grass-roots interest in the schools,” (p. 127) and were thus more democratic (Tyack, 1974). The

elected officials and community members I interviewed in Howard County appeared to agree with the latter group. For example, one elected official explained that, in 2019, all board members lived west of U.S. Route 29, meaning that community members on the far eastern side of the county and in many of the more diverse villages in Columbia did not have a representative on the school board. She explained:

All seven [board of education seats] were countywide, and every single one of those people lives west of [route] 29. So, you know, just your perspectives, what you hear, how you live, where you go to the grocery store, all of that is very concentrated. So, like, every school board member lives in two-thirds of the county.

Similarly, an Oakland Mills resident said:

We had no one from District 2 and we had no one from District 3, and historically, we have not had people from District 2 or 3. ... East Columbia and sort of like, the Hammond area, have never had real representation on the board, as far as I can remember, because every seat was elected at-large.

Yet, Howard County school board election processes were scheduled to change in 2020. Rather than electing all non-student board members at-large, five members were elected by council district and two were elected at-large. As one interview participant—who had served in many advisory roles to the district and had previously run for school board—suggested, the impending change in election procedures was likely to play a role in the 2019-2020 redistricting process. He explained:

I think that board members were ... trying to do a number of things. ... One part of it is, I [a hypothetical board member] know that the law is about to change, where I'm going to be elected if I choose to run again in a district. I better make sure that I'm focused on

what the loudest voices in my district are, because those are the people who will either make or break my candidacy when I run for re-election. ... As a political strategist and former [school board] candidate, I know that that was part of the calculus.

Subsequent findings chapters describe how several board members did, indeed, prioritize the “loudest voices” throughout redistricting.

Additionally, several community members noted that all board members—regardless of which areas of the county they represent—have what one parent described as a “tough job.” Several participants acknowledged that board members get paid poorly for “full-time job.” One Oakland Mills resident argued that the low pay and high time commitment accompanying a school board position is a barrier for many community members who would otherwise run for a seat. She explained:

Any reasonable person looks at that [board members’ salaries and commitments] and says, “Why would I do that?” ... This is, you know, a full-time job. ... I call people out on this all the time, when they say, “Well, if you don’t have the time to do it...” And I say, “So, what you’re telling me is you think that they should work full-time for fifteen thousand dollars a year? Or do you only think people who are privileged enough not to have to work should have those seats?” ... We need a real salary for the board.

Similarly, a Howard County elected official shared that “the Board of Education doesn’t even pay you enough to manage the child care needed to do the work.” An Elkridge resident added that, in addition to the low salary, board members and their families receive harassment after making controversial decisions, including redistricting decisions:

These poor people are paid \$18,000 a year as Board of Education members to do what is almost a full-time job, and then to have death threats on top of that, and then to have your children treated badly at school because your parents are a Board of Education member.

In sum, board procedures privileged some county residents over others. First, at-large board elections prior to 2019 led to the under-representation of racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse districts. And second, the low pay and extraordinary time commitment required of board members likely meant that low-income residents could not afford to take on those roles.

County Government Structure and Procedures

School board members were not the only elected officials who could play a role in HCPSS redistricting efforts. Because the district has a countywide structure, the county government was involved in redistricting too. While county councilmembers and the county executive could not play a *direct* role in redistricting per Policy 6010, they could play an *indirect* role by exercising power over the school district (which they funded) and the board members who represent it. In 2019 and 2020, the council, school board, and school district officials (e.g., the superintendent) met at least quarterly to discuss matters such as the relationship between development and school capacity, the relationship between housing policy and school segregation, the school system's budget, and educational inequities in HCPSS (e.g., disparities in student outcomes). But while they discussed a variety of issues, as councilmember David Yungmann explained, "our biggest connection to the school system is funding and budget" (9/23/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting). Each year, the school board submits a budget request to the county executive, who then reviews the request and submits it to the county council. The county council then holds public hearings, makes revisions, and adopts a

budget for the county that includes school system funding. In short, the district relies on the county for funding to maintain its operations. Consequently, the county government has what one HCPSS parent called “the power of the purse,” meaning they could withhold funds from HCPSS to incentivize them to make decisions that align with what they want the district to do. Yet, one councilmember who participated in an interview for this study argued that—despite having “the power of the purse”—the county had limited power over district decisions. While the county council *could* withhold funds from the district, they would never do so. The councilmember explained:

People were saying, “Oh, well, you can threaten to cut their funding,” and it’s like, we would never do that. Like, we actually value education. I’m not going to be hurting kids to prove policy. ... Every person on the council, I can tell you this, values children. We have different, certainly differences ... in what you want to fund and how you want to fund, but children are very important to each of the individuals who are currently on the county council, so we would never do that.

Thus, in this individual’s view, the council had no real authority over any policy decisions the school system made, including those related to redistricting. Yet, as the following chapters describe, some councilmembers used indirect strategies in an attempt to influence the extent to which the superintendent and the school board prioritized desegregation when developing potential redistricting plans.

Institutional Values and Threats to Legitimacy

As described earlier in this chapter, diversity, equity, and integration were central values of HCPSS and Columbia. These values guided both district practices (Howard County Public School System, 2019b) and the mixed-income design of many Columbia villages (Columbia

Association, 2019b). But many interview participants argued that these values were not shared by the county as a whole and had become less salient in Columbia over time. For example, one Columbia resident argued that, upon its founding in the 1960s, “People moved to Columbia, especially the people who ... liked those values. It attracted people that wanted that kind of [integrated] community.” But this resident also claimed that “the people outside of Columbia, I think, may well have been even more anti-integration because they were the people that didn’t want to live—they didn’t want this ideal community.” Likewise, a Black Columbia resident who had moved there in the 1970s described how the county outside of Columbia was segregated. He also believed that some people had chosen to live outside of Columbia to remain in a segregated area. As a result, he argued, these residents have also historically resisted redistricting efforts that diversify schools. In his words:

When I was here in ’73, Columbia was the anomaly because it was the new model city, but outside of Columbia, Howard County was very segregated. Since then, again, you have people coming from all over who are coming to work ... and moving into the area and moving into the county as opposed to the city. ... There’s a lot of different ethnic groups that live in Howard County. Columbia has a good, diverse mix. But the voices of the people outside of Columbia are often the ones that don’t want to see redistricting because I [they] moved in this community to be away from you [Columbia residents].

Another Columbia resident who identified as Black and White echoed this sentiment:

Columbia was a mixed community. It was people who wanted to live like that [who] came into Columbia. The people who didn’t want to live like that began to live around it. ... Those areas around Columbia were always segregated. Columbia was a forced social

experiment of mixing people. What happened was the people around it that didn't want to be a part of that stayed outside of that enclave.

At the same time, Columbia itself was becoming more segregated and Columbia residents were becoming less committed to integration. One Black participant described how increasing segregation in Columbia was the result of zoning decisions that had concentrated lower-income housing in certain Columbia villages. He explained:

There are certain villages, like Long Reach, Oakland Mills, Owen Brown ... those are where the low-income homes were concentrated, and there were no active measures to address the increasing segregation as it was happening. In fact, it was being caused by the politicians themselves.

Likewise, a White Columbia resident observed increasing segregation in her own neighborhood:

We [Columbia] look really diverse when you just look at total numbers. But if you focus on neighborhoods, you see that ... we may be diverse but we're still segregated, and we are growing more segregated. ... I live in a Columbia neighborhood in a house that was built in the late '70s, and all except one house on these two blocks is owned by White people.

This participant also described how Columbia residents have not actively tried to maintain an integrated community by resisting efforts to build more affordable housing. In her words:

We like to talk about Rouse and his vision, but there's a lot of—especially older White folks—who I perceive ... to be just resting on the laurels of what this vision was in the '60s. ... It's one thing to perpetuate the rhetoric if you don't actually have to give up anything, right? So we still want our tidy neighborhoods and our well-maintained pathways and our nice swimming pools. ... Our village center in Hickory Ridge really

needs some new life in it, and the people with the power to make it happen or not kept the proposal [for more affordable housing] from getting passed. And the primary rhetoric around that was “there will be too much traffic around, in and out of the village center if we add a three-level apartment building.” And the people in the neighborhood closest by felt like their privacy was gonna be invaded because, from a third-level apartment building, you’d be able to see into their yards.

In sum, the institutional commitments to equity and integration that motivated this “critical” case study (Yin, 2018) appeared to have waned over time. It is possible that the rapid and dramatic population growth in Howard County contributed to these changes, particularly because many families appear to be moving to the county for its high-quality schools and not its diversity or commitment to integration. In fact, Gary Orfield (2012) suggests that a similar phenomenon occurred in Oak Park, Illinois, a community that mobilized to integrate neighborhoods and schools in the mid-20th century. Indeed, as evident in subsequent chapters, many Asian immigrants who moved to western Howard County for its schools, as well as White families in the county, perceived that school *quality* and school *diversity* were mutually exclusive.

Although evidence suggested that the values of diversity, equity, and integration were becoming less salient in Howard County, the school district still had a reason to pursue them. Equity was a central aspect of HCPSS’s Strategic Call to Action (SCTA), and the claim that the school system was “learning and leading with equity,” as the SCTA indicated, was undermined by segregation and inequities in the district. The growing distance between rhetoric and reality in HCPSS constituted a threat to the district’s legitimacy. And as discussed in later chapters, the superintendent and some school board members cited equity and segregation as a “driving

factor” in the redistricting process, which suggests that this *social* threat to legitimacy may have motivated them to redistrict with the goal of desegregating schools.

Segregation and educational inequities in HCPSS also posed a *legal* threat to the district’s legitimacy. The superintendent, many school board members, and several county councilmembers expressed concerns that segregation and inequities in HCPSS put them at risk of being sued. In one joint meeting where the superintendent, school board members, and councilmembers were discussing inequities in HCPSS, council chair Christiana Mercer Rigby asked about the “vulnerability” of HCPSS to a lawsuit. Superintendent Martirano’s reply acknowledged that socioeconomic segregation put the district at risk:

Let’s be very honest. When we have schools at 70% [FRPM rates] versus schools that are less than 5%, 1%, that the consideration would be those kind of actions [lawsuits] being taken. I can’t predict that, but those have been possibilities” (9/23/19 joint Board of Education and County Council meeting).

Similarly, in a separate school board meeting, chair Mavis Ellis urged her fellow board members to prioritize desegregation in the 2019-2020 redistricting process because, in her words, “There is a legal question about whether we can go through this process and leave some of our schools in poverty.” This conversation led the board to request additional demographic data from the HCPSS Office of School Planning, so they could enter the redistricting process informed about existing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation and with an eye towards reducing it (6/13/19 Board of Education meeting).

Chapter Summary

The contextual and systemic political dynamics discussed in this chapter made redistricting a necessity in 2019. Schools were unsustainably overcrowded and becoming

increasingly segregated. Segregation, in particular, stood in stark contrast with the district's guiding principle of equity and Columbia's history of integration and led the superintendent, school board members, and county councilmembers to worry that they district would be sued for operating a segregated and inequitable school system. Under Policy 6010, which guides the district's redistricting processes, the district could—and, as described in the following chapters, did—use overcrowded schools as a reason to engage in redistricting. The policy also required the superintendent and school board to considers school diversity—among other, potentially competing factors—when developing redistricting plans.

Chapter 6: The Initiation Phase of Redistricting

The political factors described in the previous chapter led the Howard County Public School System to begin the process of redistricting, or redrawing school attendance boundary lines, in January 2019. This chapter describes the initiation phase of the redistricting process—which spanned from January 2019, when the school board voted to begin the process, to August 2019, when the superintendent presented his recommended redistricting plan to the board. During this phase, the HCPSS superintendent and the Howard County Board of Education “started the engine” of redistricting to address school overcrowding and segregation, and various political actors (e.g., community members, Howard County Councilmembers) attempted to influence whether, how, and to what degree potential redistricting plans would address those issues. In alignment with my conceptual model, the chapter pays particular attention to the *actors* involved in the initiation phase of redistricting; their *policy goals*, sources of *power*, and the *political skill and will* with which they deployed (or did not deploy) their resources; actors’ *influence efforts* to shape the redistricting plan that the superintendent proposed at the end of the initiation phase; how *contextual* and *systemic* political dynamics interacted with these actor-level political factors; and how these three levels of political dynamics interacted to shape the *prospects* of redistricting plans proposed in the initiation phase, or the degree to which they would have reduced racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Overall, political factors in the initiation phase bolstered the redistricting policy’s prospects for reducing segregation.

Initiating the Redistricting Process

Per HCPSS’s policy on school attendance areas, the Howard County Board of Education had the authority to initiate the redistricting process. In 2019, the school board was comprised of seven full members and one non-voting student member. All full board members had been

elected at-large, so they represented the entire county rather than individual districts. Four of the seven board members were White and most were Columbia residents. Many board members were elected in the aftermath of dissonance between Renee Foose, the superintendent prior to Michael Martirano, and the board at the time. Beginning in 2015, community members petitioned the board to remove Foose from her position for a variety of reasons, including suspending one of the board’s community oversight committees and failing to communicate with parents about facilities issues in the district. Yet, the board voted to renew her contract in 2016. Tensions between the community, superintendent, and school board persisted (Michaels, 2017). Foose filed a lawsuit against board members in January 2017, alleging that they interfered with her authority and ability to do her job as superintendent and that at least one board member discriminated against her because of beliefs about her sexual orientation (St. George, 2017). A few months later, Foose stepped down from her role and was paid a hefty severance (Prudente, 2017). The turmoil led to significant board turnover in the 2018 election, when four of the seven board members who served during redistricting were elected.

In 2019, the board’s chair was Mavis Ellis, a Black woman from Columbia, Howard County, who worked for a neighboring school system and held graduate degrees in education. Ellis was elected in 2016 and would have been up for reelection in 2020—the board race that occurred after the new attendance boundaries were implemented. Ellis centered equity in her 2016 campaign. She argued that HCPSS “need[s] to focus on things that can bring success to our neediest students ... like regular school attendance; restorative justice practices to reduce suspensions and disciplinary referrals; and positive academic performance programs” (Ballotpedia, n.d.[b]). Several interview participants identified Ellis as a politically “progressive”

board member who had long worked with other Black Howard County residents to advance equity.

The vice chair of the board in 2019 was Kirsten Coombs, a White woman from Columbia who was also elected in 2016. Coombs won the plurality of the vote (24%) in 2016 among six contenders and write-in candidates, which suggests that she was a relatively popular candidate (Ballotopedia, n.d.[a]). One elected official I interviewed suggested that, like Ellis, Coombs was “very outspoken for equity” during her campaign. Yet, others were more skeptical: one HCPSS parent described Coombs as a “conservative Democrat” and said, “I don’t think Kirsten ever really was that concerned with equity.” Another parent said of Coombs, “I like to call her sort of the Joe Manchin,” comparing her to the West Virginia Senator who is a registered Democrat but often takes more conservative stances on issues than other Senators in his party. In short, interview participants generally viewed Coombs as a wild card vote on the board, particularly when it came to issues of educational equity.

Other board members who served in 2019-2020 included Jen Mallo, a White woman from Columbia, was elected to the board in 2018. Interview participants generally viewed her as one of the “more liberal” board members; one parent also said that people viewed her as “the leader of the school board” because she was outspoken on many issues. Indeed, she did not hesitate to advocate for redistricting during her campaign. She explained: “In order to reduce overcrowded schools, we will need a solution that includes both redistricting and the construction of new facilities.” Indeed, she argued that “the most equitable solution to solve overcrowding system-wide is to do a comprehensive phased-in redistricting” (The Baltimore Sun, 2018b).

Like Mallo, Sabina Taj—an Asian woman from Ellicott City, a community north of Columbia, who was elected in 2018—leaned liberal. Interview participants frequently identified Taj as an advocate for minoritized Howard County community members and educational equity. Indeed, Taj consistently brought up achievement and opportunity gaps in board meetings, and pushed HCPSS to dedicate more funds to closing those gaps. During her campaign, she discussed several measures that she wanted the district to adopt to address inequities, including pre-kindergarten, implicit bias training, and a curriculum that reflected the diversity of HCPSS students (The Baltimore Sun, 2018c). Taj also had close ties to community organizations supporting Howard County residents of Color. Like Mallo, Taj supported redistricting during her campaign, arguing that “redistricting to alleviate overcrowded schools seems like a necessary course of action” (The Baltimore Sun, 2018c).

The remaining board members were, in the view of several interview participants, “more on the conservative side.” Vicky Cutroneo, a White woman from a community in western Howard County, lost in a run for school board in 2016 but won in 2018. Many interview participants described Cutroneo as politically moderate compared to Ellis and other more progressive board members. In the words of one parent, “Vicky Cutroneo is a little more center, but center conservative.” Another parent described Cutroneo’s middle-of-the-road approach by explaining her involvement with special education advocates in the county:

I’m very involved with the special ed[ucation] community. Vicky has always been happy when we’ve reached out to her. She’s always been happy to come talk to us, to advocate for us. It’s a way where she can keep neutral because the special education community cuts across everywhere. There’s lots of intersectionality, so she doesn’t have to choose a side.

In contrast with Mallo and Taj, Cutroneo generally opposed redistricting. During her campaign, Cutroneo claimed that “redistricting is a band-aid solution to overcrowded schools and we need stronger ... laws to address root cause” (The Baltimore Sun, 2018d).

Several interview participants likened board member Chao Wu’s politics to Cutroneo’s. Wu, an Asian man from Clarksville—a western Howard County community adjacent to the wealthy village of River Hill, Columbia—was actively involved with the Chinese American community in Howard County. Wu was elected in 2018. Like Cutroneo, he was opposed to redistricting; during his campaign, he said, “I don’t want massive redistricting for our students. ... Redistricting is only a temporary solution to solve this over-development issue in the county” (The Baltimore Sun, 2018a).

The final board member was Christina Delmont-Small, a White woman from Ellicott City. Like Mavis Ellis and Kirsten Coombs, Delmont-Small was elected to the board in 2016. Interview participants repeatedly described Delmont-Small as the most conservative member of the board. In fact, one HCPSS parent who had long been involved with county politics said, “Christina Delmont-Small, she’s the most right-wing person in office in Howard County. ... [She] is super conservative.” Delmont-Small regularly expressed concerns about the district’s budget, which meant that she also often advocated for spending less money. Some interview participants thought her commitment to a tight budget was antithetical to supporting high-need students in HCPSS. For example, one HCPSS parent who identified as Black and White explained:

Christina was obviously seen as somebody who was on the side of White affluent people.

... She always comes across as someone who objects to any spending that may improve

the situation for either Black or Brown students, or poor students or students who don't speak English.

In addition to spending, Delmont-Small also frequently expressed concerns about school overcrowding. Another HCPSS parent described Delmont-Small as “one of the most effective board members” because she had continuously advocated (though sometimes to no avail) for county council measures that would have regulated development and aided in addressing school overcrowding. But Delmont-Small's apparent conservatism did not place her on one side of the redistricting debate—at least at first. Given that she ran in 2016—when the focus of the election was repairing relationships between the community, board, and superintendent—she did not take a clear stand on redistricting. Furthermore, Delmont-Small was the board member who was perhaps most committed to ensuring HCPSS's efficiency, both in terms of efficiently using funds and efficiently using capacity—which redistricting could support.

In sum, the 2019-2020 Howard County Board of Education was diverse both politically and, to a lesser extent, racially/ethnically. Some members were outspoken about their interests in advancing educational equity during their tenure, while others were not. Some indicated support for redistricting to alleviate overcrowding during their campaigns, while others thought it was an unnecessary evil that would not address the district's capacity problems long-term. Ultimately, as described in later chapters, board members' different and often conflicting interests made for a politically contentious redistricting process.

"No Other Option" but to Redistrict

Despite board members' varying perspectives on redistricting, they all voted to initiate the formal redistricting process, guided by Policy 6010, in a board meeting on January 24th, 2019. Prior to the board's vote, HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano pleaded with the

board to “[start] the engine” of redistricting because he thought it was the district’s only remaining tool to alleviate overcrowding. Martirano argued that, while all HCPSS fell below the district’s goal of 110% capacity utilization, it did so only with the use of portable trailers that the district purchased for extra classroom space. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Martirano pointed out that the district would not be opening a new school until 2023, which, at the time, was four years away. Martirano told the board that he was “greatly concerned” about these capacity issues (1/24/19 Board of Education meeting). “We can only manage this so much longer,” he said, and described the district at a “critical tipping point” with “no other option except for ... to engage in the process of redistricting” (Nocera, 2019a).

Most board members seemed to agree with him. For example, Vicky Cutroneo—who served as the point of contact for a few schools, including Fulton Elementary, that were projected to be substantially over capacity in fall 2019, and several schools that were projected to be under-enrolled—said “I absolutely agree we need to redistrict” before motioning that the board begin the redistricting process. Given that overcrowding affected many elementary, middle, and high schools across the county, she proposed a “comprehensive” redistricting process, meaning that the board would consider plans that affected all school levels, rather than a single level (e.g., elementary), as previous redistricting efforts had (1/24/19 Board of Education meeting). Chao Wu—who served as the point of contact for several overcrowded schools, including the drastically overcrowded Howard High School, as well as several schools in the western part of the county, where families had historically opposed being redistricted—was less keen to start the redistricting process. He expressed concerns that redistricting students would lead to increases in the time students spent traveling to and from school, which he thought would, in turn, increase traffic in the county and the district’s transportation costs. Despite Wu’s hesitance, the board

unanimously voted to begin the redistricting process per Policy 6010 and to direct the superintendent to hire a consultant to aid in developing his recommended redistricting plan, which he would present to school board and the public at a board meeting in August 2019 (1/24/19 Board of Education meeting).

While, according to Policy 6010, the board could have initiated redistricting for a variety of reasons, they did so to address capacity concerns. As board member Jen Mallo—who served as the point of contact for both Glenelg High School, the westernmost and Whitest high school in HCPSS, and Wilde Lake High School, one of HCPSS’s most racially/ethnically diverse and low-income schools—later explained to Howard County Councilmembers in a joint meeting:

When we initiated it [redistricting]—there are seven criteria that can kick off a redistricting scenario where we direct the superintendent to take action, and we did that based on capacity. We cannot have capacity that is 1,000 kids at Fulton [Elementary School], 2,000 students at Howard [High School]. ... So that was the trigger. That alone set us into motion.

Interview participants also saw overcrowding as the board’s primary motivation. For example, one parent said “I think it [initiating redistricting] was due to overcrowding,” while a county councilmember noted that capacity was the key issue and whether the school board would consider other factors—like school diversity and desegregation—remained an open question. If “capacity is the driver,” she asked, “who’s in the passenger seat?”

Although board members played an active role in initiating the redistricting process, they remained in the background through most of the initiation phase. Superintendent Martirano was the primary actor during this phase, developing the recommendations that he would present at a board meeting in August 2019, while community members—including those on the

superintendent’s appointed Attendance Area Committee—and Howard County councilmembers were trying to sway him to prioritize particular factors in his proposal.

Learning about the Legality of School Desegregation Policies

It soon became clear that Superintendent Martirano wanted desegregation to be in “the passenger seat” of this redistricting process. In May 2019, at the superintendent’s request, HCPSS’s General Counsel Mark Blom presented to the school board about the legality of using redistricting and other education policies—which he called “student diversity initiatives”—to desegregate schools (5/21/19 Board of Education meeting). Blom’s presentation walked board members through three questions regarding school desegregation efforts: *Should you?*; *Can you?*; and *How do you?*

First, addressing whether the district and the board *should* try to desegregate schools, Blom presented research that highlighted the educational value of having a diverse student body. He also discussed how districts with racially/ethnically or socioeconomically segregated schools could be sued for operating those schools and provided examples of segregation lawsuits in New Jersey and Minnesota. In particular, Blom described how the plaintiffs in the Minnesota case alleged that segregated schools violated the state constitution’s education clause; he added that Maryland’s constitution uses similar language, suggesting that HCPSS was at risk of getting sued if they allowed their schools to remain segregated.

Second, to address whether the school system *can* desegregate schools, Blom explained the legal context of school desegregation. In short, Blom argued that a policy is legal if a desegregation policy uses race-neutral factors like socioeconomic status to determine students’ school assignments. He explained the *Parents Involved* (2007) decision—which limited districts’ ability to use individual students’ race(s) in school assignment decisions—to the board, but

suggested that it did not need to be a “road block” or “death knell” to implementing school desegregation policies (5/21/19 Board of Education meeting).

Finally, Blom addressed *how* the district could desegregate by describing how other school systems have used controlled choice policies, magnet schools, and redistricting policies to create and maintain diverse schools. He described an inter-district enrollment plan that Hartford, Connecticut, schools had implemented, which demonstrated what “intention, creativity, and will-power can do to help come up with ideas [to desegregate schools], because we’re really only limited by our own creativity in this regard” (5/21/19 Board of Education meeting). He was optimistic about HCPSS’s ability to implement a similar policy.

Blom ended his presentation by offering the board “tips” on how to desegregate HCPSS. Many of his suggestions related to generating community support for—or mitigating resistance to—desegregation policies (5/21/19 Board of Education meeting). For example, he recommended publicly discussing how promoting diversity supports the school system’s mission and advised that voluntary policies like controlled choice—which would allow parents to select their preferred schools but give the district discretion to ensure that schools maintained some degree of diversity—may be less politically contentious than redistricting. Blom also recommended using socioeconomic indicators, rather than race/ethnicity, to determine student assignments. Ultimately, Blom said that, as an attorney, he would give the “green light” to the school board and district staff to embark on efforts to desegregate HCPSS (6/5/19 Board of Education meeting).

All seven board members appeared receptive to Blom’s presentation and suggestions. For example, board member Cutroneo said that the presentation was “informative and useful, especially as we approach the next phase of redistricting” (5/21/19 Board of Education meeting).

In a meeting in early June 2019 where board members had the opportunity to ask Blom follow-up questions about his presentation, the two women of Color on the board—board chair Mavis Ellis and member Sabina Taj—requested that Blom share additional resources about school desegregation efforts that board members could review before deliberating potential redistricting plans. Blom, board members, and the superintendent also discussed the importance of “socializing the community” around the value of school diversity to take the “fear and resistance” out of using redistricting to desegregate schools (6/5/19 Board of Education meeting), implying that such resistance resulted largely from ignorance or misinformation rather than racism. This conversation illustrated how many actors used the terms “diversity” and “desegregation” interchangeably.

The Feasibility Study

In line with Policy 6010, the next step in the initiation phase was for the district to conduct its annual Feasibility Study, which aimed to “inform the [district’s] long-term planning process” (Howard County Public School System, 2019a; p. 4) by projecting student enrollment for the coming years and presenting options to accommodate growth. Given that the board had voted to initiate the formal redistricting process months earlier, the 2019 Feasibility Study served in large part to provide the superintendent and board members with potential redistricting plans to consider implementing for the 2020-2021 school year.

HCPSS staff presented the results of the Feasibility Study to the superintendent and school board at a board meeting in June 2019. The study projected that HCPSS enrollment in 2019-2020 would be 1.4% higher than it was the previous year; it also predicted an enrollment increase of about 6,700 students over the next ten years. According to the study, existing patterns of growth would result in 21 school being overcrowded or under-enrolled in 2020-2021. The

Feasibility Study included 10 potential redistricting plans, which HCPSS’s Office of School Planning (OSP) had developed, and “focused on alleviating crowding in the most crowded areas of the county using capacity at schools with low capacity utilization” (Howard County Public School System, 2019a; p. 38). The report acknowledged that “while all Policy 6010 factors are considered [in the Feasibility Study options], there is no one plan [that] can reconcile each school attendance area adjustment with all factors” (Howard County Public School System, 2019a; p. 38). In essence, these statements admitted that the Feasibility Study options prioritized school capacity utilization over community stability and creating demographically diverse schools, the other two factors outlined in Policy 6010.

Prospects for Reduced Segregation under the Feasibility Study Plans

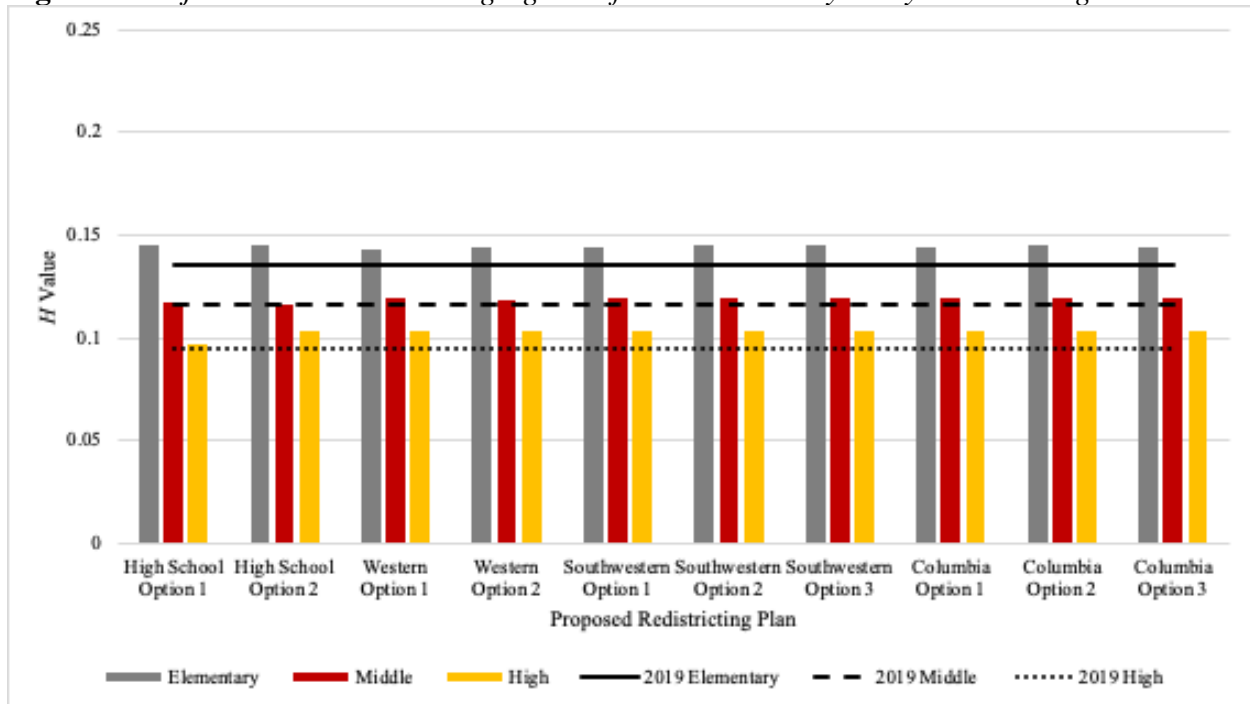
While each of the ten Feasibility Study options varied slightly in the schools and students they included and their potential effects on school capacity, they were consistent in how they would have affected racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in the district. Figure 5 (Appendix E) shows the projected racial/ethnic segregation rates associated with each Feasibility Study option (e.g., High School Option 1, Columbia Option 3) relative to 2019 racial/ethnic segregation rates, and Figure 6 (Appendix F) shows the socioeconomic segregation rates associated with each option relative to 2019 socioeconomic segregation rates. There was very little variation in projected racial/ethnic segregation among Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students, as measured by *H*, for Feasibility Study options at each school level. For example, across Feasibility Study options, projected racial/ethnic segregation for elementary schools fell between 0.14 and 0.15; at the middle and high school levels, projected segregation rates were consistently 0.12 and 0.10, respectively. Projected racial/ethnic segregation for these proposed redistricting plans was highest at the elementary school level and lowest at the high school level.

Across school levels and plans, segregation fell on the low end of the moderate range (between 0.10 and 0.25 [Reardon & Yun, 2003]). In other words, across school levels, these Feasibility Study options would have distributed Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students fairly evenly throughout the district. Yet, all of these proposed plans had projected racial/ethnic segregation rates *above* rates in 2019, meaning that implementing these boundary changes could have increased segregation in HCPSS, if only slightly.

Results from the interaction index showed similar patterns: projected racial/ethnic segregation between Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students was similar across all ten Feasibility Study options. Appendix G shows that, across elementary, middle, and high school levels and different combinations of racial/ethnic groups, the degree to which students of one group would be exposed to students of another varied slightly (1-3%) from corresponding 2019 rates. Some of the largest projected changes in exposure were for Hispanic and Black students. For example, in 2019, the average Hispanic high school student attended a school that was 67% Black. Yet, the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study projected that the average Hispanic high school student would attend a school that was 69-70% Black. Black high school students only accounted for 24% of HCPSS students in 2019; thus, Hispanic students were projected to attend schools that were disproportionately Black, relative to the percentage of Black students in the district, under the Feasibility Study plans. In other words, implementing the Feasibility Study options could have further concentrated Hispanic and Black students in the same high schools. These increases are small, to be sure, but at the very least, they—like results from the *H* index—indicate that implementing these proposed redistricting plans would have done little to alleviate existing racial/ethnic segregation.

Likewise, little variation in socioeconomic segregation—here meaning the evenness of

Figure 5. Projected Racial/Ethnic Segregation for the Feasibility Study Redistricting Plans



Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

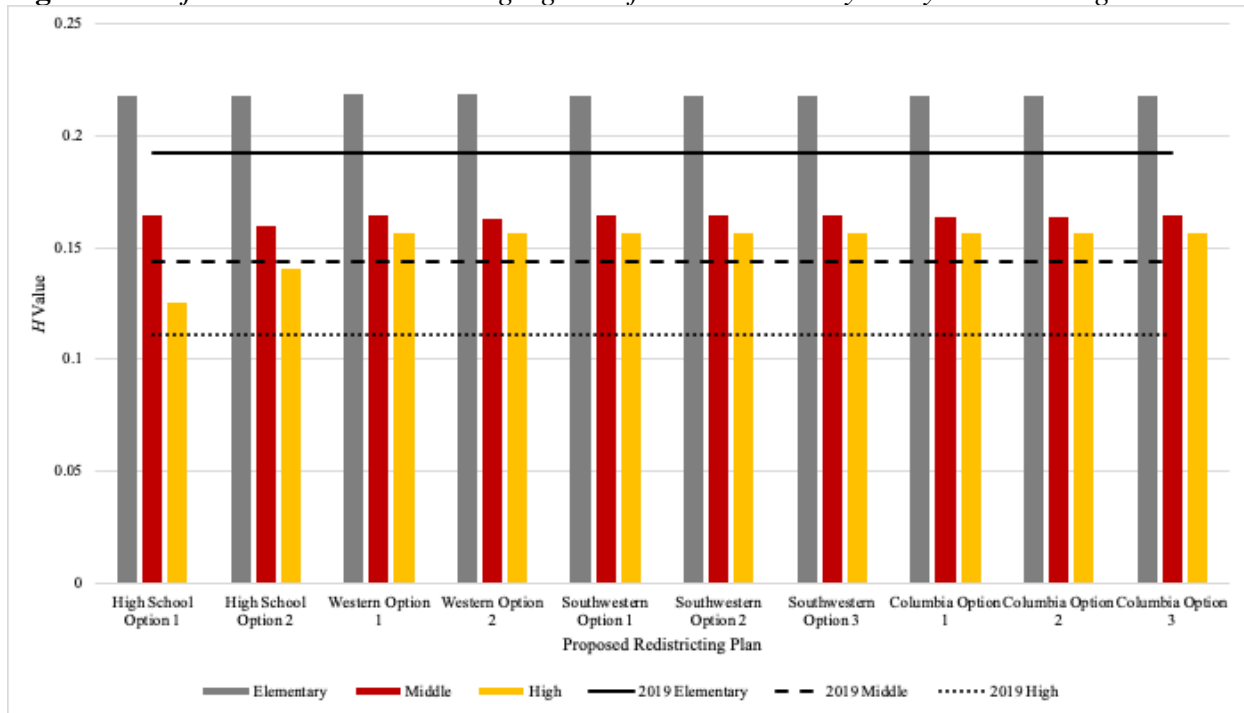
the distribution of students receiving Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FRPM)—existed across Feasibility Study redistricting plans at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Figure 6; Appendix F). However, projected socioeconomic segregation for the Feasibility Study redistricting plans, as measured by H , was higher than projected racial/ethnic segregation for all levels. Furthermore, projected socioeconomic segregation under these plans was well above corresponding 2019 socioeconomic segregation rates. For example, elementary-level socioeconomic segregation was 0.19 in 2019 and projected to be 0.22 under the Feasibility Study plans. Projections for all levels fell within the moderate range (0.10-0.25).

Interaction index results for segregation between FRPM and non-FRPM students, shown in Appendix H, also suggested that implementing the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study could have increased socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS. These results indicated the percentage of non-FRPM students that the average FRPM student would attend

school with under the ten Feasibility Study options. At elementary, middle, and high school levels, results were similar for all of these proposed redistricting plans. Furthermore, at all levels, the proposed plans projected lower exposure rates for FRPM to non-FRPM students than corresponding 2019 rates. In other words, implementing the Feasibility Study options could have further segregated FRPM students from non-FRPM students. For example, in 2019, the average FRPM high school student attended a school where 75% of students did not receive FRPM. At the time, approximately 83% of students in HCPSS did not receive FRPM; thus, FRPM students attended schools with disproportionately fewer non-FRPM students. The proposed redistricting plans from the Feasibility Study projected that, if these plans were implemented, the average FRPM high school student would attend a school where 67-68% of students did not receive FRPM. In sum, evidence from both *H* and the interaction index suggest that implementing the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study could have increased socioeconomic segregation across elementary, middle, and high schools in HCPSS.

Taken together, this evidence indicates that, across the board, the redistricting plans that the HCPSS Office of School Planning proposed in the Feasibility Study had the potential to increase both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS. Potential increases would have been most dramatic for socioeconomic segregation at the elementary level. These findings are relatively unsurprising, given that, in the Feasibility Study report, the OSP stated that their proposed redistricting plans prioritized alleviating overcrowding over school diversity and other factors in Policy 6010. These findings also provide evidence that—as many interview participants, district officials, and board members acknowledged—developing a redistricting plan that balanced school capacity, desegregated or maintained diverse schools, and maintained community stability was nearly impossible. Consequently, the superintendent and school board

Figure 6. Projected Socioeconomic Segregation for the Feasibility Study Redistricting Plans



Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

members who were responsible for devising potential redistricting plans would likely have to choose which factor among the three specified in Policy 6010 was most important: reducing overcrowding, desegregating schools, or ensuring that students living in the same neighborhoods attended the same schools. As described later in this chapter and in subsequent findings chapters, actors disagreed on which factor to prioritize over others.

Influence Efforts in the Initiation Phase

After the HCPSS Office of School Planning presented the Feasibility Study, the district invited HCPSS parents and other Howard County community members to share their feedback on the potential redistricting plans OSP presented, and the factors they believed Superintendent Michael Martirano should prioritize when developing his recommended redistricting plan, which he was scheduled to present at a school board meeting in August 2019. HCPSS solicited public input in two ways. First, they sent a survey to HCPSS parents that sought information about

parents' perceptions of the Feasibility Study options and the factors they wanted the district and school board to prioritize when redistricting. Parents could also submit their own proposed redistricting plans. Second, HCPSS held several public input sessions—led by HCPSS staff and consultants that the district hired to assist in developing a redistricting plan—where parents could share additional feedback that the superintendent would consider when developing his recommendation. As the general public sought to influence Superintendent Martirano's recommendation, so too did Attendance Area Committee members—who met regularly with the superintendent as he developed his proposal—and the Howard County council. This section discusses influence efforts from these three groups of actors, with particular attention to actors' policy goals, sources of power, and political skill and will to use them, as well as the strategies actors used to influence the superintendent as he developed his redistricting recommendation.

Howard County Community Members

Many Howard County community members provided feedback on the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study and the factors that they wanted the superintendent to prioritize by responding to a survey that HCPSS disseminated. The district reported that a total of 2,716 Howard County community members responded, many of whom identified themselves as parents of HCPSS students. The next several sections rely on evidence from survey responses to gauge community members' policy goals regarding redistricting, as well as their sources of power, political skill, and political will to influence the redistricting policy process during the initiation phase. The vast majority of survey respondents opposed one or more options presented in the Feasibility Study for a wide range of reasons, from increased commute times for students to decreased property values for parents. Amidst this wave of opposition to the Feasibility Study options, some respondents supported redistricting because they believed it was an opportunity to

address segregation and severe overcrowding in HCPSS. Community members on both sides had several sources of power to influence the redistricting process, including the power to sue the district for operating segregated schools and the power to move from Howard County if particular redistricting plans were implemented. Some of these community members were skillful in the strategies and timing they used to try to influence the policy process, and many exhibited the political will to advance or undermine the redistricting effort.

Opposition to Redistricting

Parents cited countless reasons for opposing the redistricting plans presented in the Feasibility Study, including students' travel time to school, divided communities, and lower property values. Additionally, parents argued that HCPSS should build new schools and expand old ones rather than redistricting.

"Unreasonable" Travel Distance and Time. Countless survey respondents opposed the Feasibility Study options because they would have increased the time and distances students had to travel to get to school, which many respondents characterized as both "unreasonable" and in violation of Policy 6010. As one parent wrote, "If we were to consider either option in the current study, our children will go to a school seven miles away and be on the bus for over an hour! This simply will not do." Another explained, "These Feasibility Study options do not address all the aspects of Policy 6010. These options would cause a substantial increase in the time students are on the road." Parents also argued that longer commutes would "harm" students because they would have to wake up earlier for school. For example, one respondent said of the proposed redistricting plans, "You are setting my children up to fail, based on ... the lack of sleep they will suffer to get to school. ... The harm to my children ... would be an abomination."

Some parents claimed that increasing the time required to travel to school would limit the number of after-school activities in which they could participate:

The long commute will prevent our students from meaningfully participating in academic and extracurricular activities which are essential not only to their personal development, but to their college admissions prospects. ... The extra hours spent in cars and buses will add up over a semester, or even a week, to levels that detract from family life and from our children's time for study, extra-curricular activities, and the rest that they badly need.

Other parents noted that, if their children were assigned to schools further from home, it would be more difficult for them to get to their children's schools when needed. In the words of one respondent: "Increased commute times impede parents' ability to quickly get to school for unforeseen emergencies, makes it difficult for timely aftercare pickups, and diminishes parents' opportunities to participate in school activities with our children." In sum, many parents perceived that the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study would inconvenience both students and parents.

Survey respondents also argued that these proposed redistricting plans would cause undue financial burden on the school system by busing more students for longer distances. In particular, many parents pleaded for the district to "keep walkers as walkers," meaning they wanted HCPSS to allow students who walked to school to continue to walk to school, rather than redistricting them to a school farther away, which would require them to ride a bus and increase transportation costs, diverting funds from the district's other needs. For example, one respondent said that "transporting students within walking distance of schools will leave less money for critical needs, like a new high school and more teachers."

Disrupting “Community.” Many parents who responded to the Feasibility Study survey also argued that the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study would “tear apart” communities which, like increased travel times, was “unfair” to students and in violation of Policy 6010. Countless parents requested that HCPSS “keep communities together,” “keep neighborhoods together,” “keep the students from the neighborhood in the same school.” Others suggested that, by moving students out of their communities, redistricting plans contradicted Policy 6010’s charge to send students living in the same area to the same school. For example, one parent claimed that one proposed plan was “deeply flawed and violates the community stability objectives of Policy 6010.”

Generally, these statements demonstrate that the majority of parents who responded to the survey conceived of “community” as one’s neighborhood, which, in some areas of Howard County, was both racially/ethnically and socioeconomically segregated. As one respondent explained, “I simply believe that neighborhoods really must be kept together. Schools are the heart of social interactions in neighborhoods and breaking them up will harm the social and eventually the economic strength of our county.” Other respondents argued that sending their child to a school outside of their neighborhood would remove them from their so-called community. For example, one parent whose child was proposed to be redistricted from a school in Ellicott City to a school in Wilde Lake—which are approximately a 10-minute drive from one another—argued:

Not only is Wilde Lake too far geographically, it is located in a community we never visit; our life is centered upon Ellicott City and Catonsville, not Columbia. Although a lovely community, it is not where we chose to live, or work, or do business.

Similarly, another parent claimed that one Feasibility Study option was “forcing some of us to travel to a community that does not include us.”

Parents also argued that, by sending students to schools outside their neighborhood, the proposed redistricting plans would ruin the social ties they had with other children in their neighborhood. For example, one respondent stated:

Children who trick or treat together every Halloween, children who ride bikes together and walk down to the stream together, who literally live a block from one another, are being split in your plans to attend different schools. It’s heartbreaking.

Similarly, another argued that, under these proposed plans, children would “lose friends, traditions, consistency, and community.” Several respondents believed that sending students to schools apart from their friends would have a negative effect on their mental health. For instance, one respondent argued that redistricting “breaks up many kids’ friendships and has a devastating effect on their social development.” Another suggested that redistricting would “cause undue stress” because children “would be forced to move to a school at which they would have no friends and ... where the existing classmates have been together for several years.”

Not only did parents argue that the redistricting plans proposed in the Feasibility Study would separate them from the community in which they *lived*, they also argued that these plans would remove them from the community in which they *wanted to live*. Many parents wrote that they moved to particular neighborhoods in Howard County because they wanted to attend the schools in those neighborhoods. Given that they purposefully chose to live in those neighborhoods for their schools, they believed that it was unfair to redistrict them. For example, one parent argued that “it is not right to have our children suddenly changed to another school when we have paid for the right for them to go to the school in our neighborhood.” Some parents suggested that

redistricting was particularly unfair for families who had purchased “expensive” homes in Howard County. For instance, one parent explained:

We just bought a very expensive house in this neighborhood solely BECAUSE of the school ranks for our children. It is extremely unfair to redistrict the school system. ... Do not punish and break apart the neighborhoods ... and the families who have invested so much into their schools.

Overall, parents that responded to the Feasibility Study survey wanted their children to remain in schools within their neighborhoods and with their friends. To many respondents, redistricting students out of the schools and neighborhoods their parents desired was, in the words of one parent, “simply not fair.” And given that many neighborhoods were racially/ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous, these arguments suggested that some HCPSS parents wanted their children to continue attending racially/ethnically and socioeconomically segregated schools.

Property Values. Some parents opposed the Feasibility Study redistricting plans because they thought they would lower property values—a common refrain that numerous studies of desegregation have documented (e.g., Bierbaum & Sunderman, 2021; Castro et al., 2022). Generally, these respondents equated property value with school quality, and believed that redistricting students in their polygon to a school that they perceived to be lower-quality would have a negative effect on their property values. For example, one respondent said that “people ... make decisions on where to live based on the school districts, and the school districts impact housing costs. It is not fair to anyone who would be negatively impacted by changing these boundaries.” Another respondent agreed that redistricting would be unfair to residents whose property values may decrease:

Changing the schools *will* impact home resale value and Howard County as a whole. Everyone knows that people move to Howard County for the schools, and homes with poor-performing schools sell for *way* less than those with high-performing schools. Hardworking men and women have saved (some for a lifetime) for their homes, and the thought of the resale going down in these homes is just devastating. ... Please leave well enough alone.

Overall, though, fewer survey respondents cited property values as a reason for opposing the proposed redistricting plans than cited unreasonable commute times and disruption to communities.

Building New Schools Instead of Redistricting. In addition to citing the reasons *why* they did not want their children to be redistricted, many parents advocated for HCPSS to build more schools and expand existing ones. For example, one parent wrote that “new schools are desperately needed,” adding, “I also cannot understand why we do not add on to existing buildings to increase capacity.” Another said, simply, “stop redistricting and build new schools.” These parents believed that building new schools was preferable to redistricting for many reasons. Some cited reasons previously described, like maintaining neighborhood schools. For example, one parent suggested that adding more portable classrooms (i.e., trailers) to schools was preferable to redistricting because it would allow children to remain with their friends:

Add a few more portable classrooms. ... My kids have both had classes in these the last few years and would much prefer to have more classes in a portable than be isolated from their neighborhood and friends, and moved to another school.

Others suggested that redistricting could not keep up with the county’s fast growth, and that “the real solution” was to build new schools, particularly in areas that were overcrowded and still

experiencing development. Ultimately, whatever the reason, building new schools was the preferred choice over redistricting for many parents who responded to the Feasibility Study survey.

Support for Redistricting

Fewer community members who responded to the Feasibility Study survey supported the proposed redistricting plans and/or redistricting in general. Respondents who expressed support did so for two primary reasons: desegregating schools and reducing overcrowding.

Desegregating Schools. Many survey respondents advocated for HCPSS and the school board to desegregate schools, several of whom indicated that they were from racially/ethnically diverse and lower-income areas of Columbia, like Oakland Mills and Wilde Lake. For example, many parents pleaded to “end segregation in our schools.” Similarly, a parent from Oakland Mills, argued that the district should “do everything we can to integrate our schools racially and economically.” Other respondents wanted to ensure that schools were racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, because, as one respondent explained, “diversity is a good thing.” For instance, one parent argued that “creating an environment with economic and racial diversity at every school should be a high priority.” Another suggested that the district should prioritize diversity because it aligned with the fundamental goals of Columbia: “We moved to Columbia to ensure our children would be in diverse schools (both socioeconomically and racially). Please ensure our schools do not become more segregated. Please do not move away from Jim Rouse’s vision!”

In addition to advocating for the district to prioritize desegregation when developing redistricting plans, many respondents argued that the Feasibility Study options either did not do enough to desegregate schools or further segregated them. For example, one respondent from

Ellicott City said, “I would like to see more dramatic changes, with equity as a higher priority.”

Another respondent appeared to agree, stating:

I do not believe any of the [Feasibility Study] options attempt to balance schools regarding economic diversity. Under each option, there are high-poverty schools, based on FARMs data, while neighboring schools have much lower FARMs rates. This is a disservice to students and neighborhoods as all benefit from economic diversity.

Yet another respondent added that, “if this redistricting plan gets implemented without regard to improving educational equity within our schools, Howard County will end up with a solidly “separate but equal,” “haves and have nots” school system.”

Other respondents believed that the Feasibility Study options were, in the words of one respondent, “shameful,” because they exacerbated segregation in their neighborhood and others. Several of these respondents indicated that they lived in Oakland Mills. For example, one parent from Oakland Mills wrote:

How is this fair? This is segregation! We need to spread out the FARMs population in order to best utilize resources. This plan is modern day segregation that will lead to less diverse schools. Do not further disadvantage Oakland Mills even more.

Another Oakland Mills parent added, “the current high school plans do not sufficiently integrate our schools, they uphold the existing segregation.” One interview participant from Oakland Mills also recalled how the Feasibility Study options would have upheld segregation. He explained:

There were people unhappy with what came out of that Feasibility Study, myself included. ... It certainly didn’t explicitly place an emphasis on concepts like equity, and I would say implicitly it didn’t as well, which is one of the reasons that I wasn’t quite very happy with it. It did seem to be more of the same for certain areas of the county.

This Oakland Mills parent further suggested that the implementing the Feasibility Study plans could have put HCPSS at risk of a segregation lawsuit: “You could definitely see some things in these recommendations where you would go, “Well, my gosh! If they actually do that, they’re probably going to get sued,” because, you know, they’re basically recreating segregation in some of these recommendations.” Overall, these community members believed that the Feasibility Study plans failed to prioritize the factor that they thought should have been top of the list: school diversity.

Reducing Overcrowding. Some Feasibility Study survey respondents acknowledged that a small amount of redistricting was necessary to address overcrowding in HCPSS. For example, one respondent argued that, “regardless of what the community feedback is, the school board needs to make these difficult decisions [to redistrict] because the overcrowding is out of control and has been for a while.” Another parent agreed that redistricting was necessary, even if it meant that her children would have to change schools: “We don’t want to be redistricted because we love our current school, but if we have to move it will be okay. I am concerned that *all* schools in Howard County are fading in quality due to overcrowding.”

Most respondents who advocated for the district and school board to address overcrowding with redistricting indicated that their children were current or prospective students at Fulton Elementary School, which HCPSS projected to be almost 20% over capacity in the 2019-2020 school year. For example, one Fulton parent said:

I am extremely disappointed that Fulton Elementary School is not considered in this boundary review. ... The issue at Fulton Elementary School has been known for a long time, and now we are at critical mass because nothing has been done. Waiting for a new school to open is not acceptable. *Do something.*”

Another parent whose child was set to attend Fulton the following year shared the same sentiment:

I am concerned that there appears to be no plan for addressing significant overcrowding at Fulton Elementary School where my daughter will be starting next fall. I do not understand why the school system is not doing something to address that issue now.

Yet another Fulton parent pleaded for the district and school board to alleviate overcrowding at the school because it was unsafe:

Fulton Elementary's building is ... exceeding capacity. Even with the 5th graders using portables, when there is a tornado warning, those students are moved inside the schools. ... This creates a dangerous situation if something is to happen to the school with the high concentration of people in a small space. The potential for a high number of casualties is ridiculous.

In sum, most community members who responded to the Feasibility Study survey *opposed* redistricting for the inconveniences and disruptions they thought it would cause. Yet, many of these seemingly innocuous reasons for opposing particular redistricting plans appeared grounded in racism and classism. Still, others *advocated* for redistricting to address racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation and overcrowding in HCPSS. But even advocates took issue with the redistricting plans presented in the Feasibility Study, which they believed exacerbated segregation and failed to alleviate the district's most crowded schools.

Community Members' Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Community members had a variety of power resources at their disposal to influence the initiation phase of the redistricting process, and they deployed those resources with different degrees of political skill and will. District policies and procedures concentrated community

influence efforts in the initiation phase. Community members shared their feedback on the Feasibility Study, which included open-ended responses. Additionally, the district held four community input sessions in July 2019, which, according to HCPSS, “were intended to provide a satisfying and meaningful opportunity for the discussion of ideas and to provide input to the superintendent” (Superintendent’s Attendance Area Adjustment Plan). Finally, the district offered community members the chance to submit their own redistricting proposals.

Although the district reported 2,716 responses to the survey and 800 attendees at public input sessions, those numbers were a fraction of the 57,000 students enrolled, which suggests that HCPSS’s policies and procedures for soliciting community input on redistricting may not have reached *all* parents. Moreover, it is unclear whether these input structures offered the same opportunities for families across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups to share their perspectives on redistricting during this phase of the policy process, which seems important given that these plans would have impacted students of various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups across the district. Not incorporating feedback from all of these groups—particularly minoritized groups—put the district at risk of advancing a redistricting plan that disproportionately affected minoritized communities, like many other desegregation policies have done (e.g., Horsford, 2010; Morris, 2008). And there was no evidence that HCPSS took steps to ensure that community input on the Feasibility Study redistricting plans was representative of the racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population the district served.

Along with the formal power granted to community members by HCPSS’s public input procedures, those who responded to the Feasibility Study survey cited several additional sources of power to influence the policy process. For example, a few respondents from Oakland Mills

cited parents' power to sue the district if they implemented redistricting plans that exacerbated segregation. In the words of one Oakland Mills parent, "what is being done to Oakland Mills under either [Feasibility Study plans] High School Option 1 or Option 2 is so obviously racist that it will never hold up in court." These statements reflected community members' power to *promote* redistricting.

More frequently, however, respondents identified their power to *resist* redistricting. Most often, respondents noted that they had the power to leave the school district—whether for another district or for private school—if they were displeased with the redistricting plan the board chose to enact. For example, one respondent stated simply, "my wife and I are considering moving to a different county or state based on the decision." Another wrote that "if HCPSS chooses to implement High School Option 1 [from the Feasibility Study options], we are prepared to move from this county." As in previous redistricting efforts, parents whose children would have been redistricted to schools with more Black, Hispanic, and low-income students were the most likely to make these threats. For instance, one parent whose children would have been redistricted from Howard High School to Long Reach High School—which, in 2019, had higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students than Howard—explained: "My kids would be moved from Howard to Long Reach if [Feasibility Study] Option 1 goes into effect. I won't allow this. I will move out of Howard County if this happens." Likewise, another Howard parent threatened to move or vote out current board members if redistricted to Long Reach or Wilde Lake High School—which, like Long Reach, had higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students than Howard—because those schools were "low performing." In this parent's words:

I moved my family to Howard County because of the great schools. Your proposals will reassign my son to Long Reach, which is low-performing compared to most other high schools in the county. ... I will move before I allow my son to attend Long Reach or Wilde Lake. I will also vote against any board member who supports either of these proposals. ... It seems only fair to first raise the quality of low-performing schools before forcing students into those schools. We all want our children to have the best opportunities, which is why many of us live in Howard County, and I doubt any of the board members would be supportive of these proposals if they impacted their families directly. It is fine to have ideals, but I only have one son.

In sum, these parents invoked the power to leave the district if the redistricting decision would move their children to schools that they viewed as undesirable—a phenomenon frequently discussed in the school desegregation literature (e.g., Wells & Serna, 1996). Given the financial cost of moving, threats of exit also suggest that these parents may have had another source of power: wealth. This finding is unsurprising, given that Howard County is one of the wealthiest in the nation (Johnson, 2022). As discussed in subsequent findings chapters, the wealth that some Howard County families possessed was evident in their efforts to influence the redistricting process during enactment and implementation phases.

Although less evident, Feasibility Study survey responses also provided some information about some community members' political skill, or how effectively they deployed their power resources (Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Meltsner, 1972). As a rhetorical matter, however, one should not reduce these claims to assertions of personal choice. These parents grounded their resistance to redistricting in institutional policy, perhaps in an effort to legitimize their perspectives in the eyes of the superintendent and to deflect the racial, ethnic, and economic

implications of their preferred policies. Community members who responded to the Feasibility Study survey also relied on timing to maximize political impact: these respondents appeared to recognize that their feedback would at least be shared with the superintendent, if not incorporated into his recommended redistricting plan.

Many of these community members also demonstrated that they had the political will to use their resources. As previously described, several Feasibility Study respondents threatened to leave Howard County if one or more of the proposed redistricting plans were implemented; these threats not only alluded to respondents' *power* to influence the policy process, they also demonstrated respondents' *will* to at least consider relocating because of redistricting. Similarly, respondents' threats to sue the district for exacerbating segregation if the Feasibility Study plans were implemented demonstrate their willingness to at least consider taking legal action against HCPSS. Additional evidence from Feasibility Study survey responses suggested that many parents were willing to play an active role in the redistricting process. For example, countless respondents wrote that they "plan to attend every meeting possible to engage you [HCPSS] and the rest of the community on this topic." As discussed in the following chapter, many in the county took this statement to heart; so many parents attended the school board's meetings on redistricting that they had to add extra nights of public hearings and create overflow rooms for in-person attendees.

The Attendance Area Committee

Per Policy 6010, Superintendent Michael Martirano appointed several community members to an Attendance Area Committee (AAC), which met to discuss potential redistricting plans and provided feedback to the superintendent as he developed his recommendation. The superintendent appointed 13 community members to the AAC, which met four times during June

and July 2019. AAC members represented a variety of regions in the county, as well as interest groups and community members of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Members included an HCPSS high school student, AAC members from prior years, a former HCPSS administrator, and the president of the Parent-Teacher Association at Stevens Forest Elementary School, which, at the time, had one of the highest FRPM rates in HCPSS. Additionally, Martirano appointed representatives of the following groups in Howard County: the Luminus Network for New Americans, which provides legal, social, and language services to immigrants and refugees in the county; HCPSS's Special Education Advisory Board; the African-American Community Roundtable, which aims to enhance the quality of life for African-Americans in the county; the Howard County Chamber of Commerce; the Howard County Muslim Council and Dar Al-Taqwa, a nonprofit group that aims to support Muslim residents of the county; the Parent-Teacher Association president; People Acting Together in Howard, a faith-based organization that aims to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in the county; and the county's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Generally, it appeared that the superintendent appointed individuals from groups that aimed to support minoritized residents of Howard County; the three AAC members who participated in an interview made the same observation. In particular, they suggested that the superintendent selected AAC members who valued educational equity, like he did. For example, one AAC member explained:

I felt like it [the AAC] was diverse, but I also felt like ... it was people that probably were a little more open-minded than the community as a whole. What I mean by that is I think the superintendent placed people on there in some respect that either—I'm not going to say would support him, but at least to follow his line of thinking ... about the whole piece

of at least considering the role of economic equity in the mix. ... Just people that ... maybe went into it objectively and open-minded as opposed to saying, “Hey, if I get on this committee, I’m going to fight for my neighborhood.”

Another AAC member agreed:

Interviewer: There were quite a few folks who were in line with his [Superintendent Martirano’s] interests in advancing equity through redistributing students across schools. Is that a correct read?

AAC member: That was also my read. ... I certainly got that impression, that we represented diversity in gender and race but probably not in politics very much. ... The politics of redistricting. ... It seemed like we were pretty well-aligned politically.

Likewise, a third AAC member who had long advocated for Black students and community members in Howard County said, “my involvement in equity is one that I’m sure made the superintendent invite me to be a part of this ... committee.” But while this evidence suggests that the AAC was diverse and contained members with a history of advocating for equity, it was not representative of all minoritized groups in the county. The committee’s draft report indicated that no AAC members represented the segment of the community whose children would receive FRPM in school. Indeed, the report indicated that the lack of representation for low-income families in the county was a “recurring concern” for many AAC members (Attendance Area Committee Draft Report).

The majority of AAC members wanted the superintendent to use redistricting as an opportunity to desegregate schools, and their power to influence the policy process largely stemmed from their positions on the AAC, which granted them a direct line of communication to the superintendent. While few qualitative data addressed AAC members’ political skill and will

to exert influence, evidence suggested that some committee members possessed valuable knowledge of HCPSS and AAC procedures. Furthermore, AAC members' willingness to serve on the committee indicated at least some degree of interest in shaping the redistricting effort.

Advocating for Equity

Given that the superintendent appointed AAC members whom he thought would prioritize equity in redistricting, it is unsurprising that the AAC's draft report indicated that "the majority of the AAC discussion centered on the current socioeconomic imbalance with the current attendance boundary configuration" (Attendance Area Committee Draft Report; p. 4). Furthermore, the majority of committee members "concluded that the current imbalance was an important issue," "that the options presented in the Feasibility Study did not address this standard," and "that an effort to balance the socioeconomics of all boundaries is needed" (Attendance Area Committee Draft Report; p. 4). In other words, unlike the majority of community members who responded to the Feasibility Study survey, the majority of AAC members believed that the redistricting plan needed to prioritize desegregation. Interview participants who were on the AAC confirmed that the majority of committee members advocated for the superintendent's recommendation to prioritize equity in the form of desegregation. As one AAC member recalled:

Unlike past years ... we were with a real focus on equity. Not just moving the population for the sake of moving it, but let's have some equity in here. For example, one of our schools, Stevens Forest Elementary School, had a 68% free and reduced meal population.

Sixty-eight percent. At Fulton Elementary School, just a few short miles away, ... I believe it was less than 15%.⁷ ... How do you have a school that is just a few blocks away have these disparities? One of the things that I wanted to make sure was at the table in this [AAC] discussion was equity.

Another AAC member said she explicitly told the superintendent that the committee would support him if he recommended a plan that prioritized equity. At the same time, she appeared to acknowledge that recommending a plan that prioritized desegregation would be politically contentious. In her words:

I remember saying to him [Superintendent Martirano] at that point, “it is still not entirely clear to me what you need from us [AAC members], but here’s what I wanna tell you. I think that probably what you need from us as the leaders that we are in this room is somebody to cover your ass, and I’m here for that if you do the right thing. If the decision that comes out of this office is one that is bold and actually makes a difference, and doesn’t do the bare minimum to just shuffle a few students around so that all the really overcrowded schools are slightly less overcrowded. ... If you do something bolder than that, that really does move the pieces forward in terms of equity, then I’m gonna speak up in your defense.

But while many AAC members advocated for the superintendent to prioritize equity in his recommendation, not all viewed it as the most important factor in redistricting. For example, one AAC member who was a Black leader in the community recalled resistance from an Asian AAC member who had immigrated to the United States and who wanted their children to continue

⁷ In 2019, the FRPM rate at Stevens Forest Elementary School was 65% according to HCPSS data and 58% according to NCES data. The FRPM rate at Fulton Elementary School was less than or equal to 5% according to HCPSS data and 4% according to NCES data.

attending a particular school. He argued that this member did not understand the historical context of segregation and, consequently, viewed educational inequities as the product of individual effort. He explained:

They [the redistricting consultants] proposed something to our committee. ... The majority of us on the committee didn't feel it went far enough [to desegregate schools]. Now, there was representation from the South Asian community on the community as well that pushed back against us because [they said], "We've moved here for this reason." It's the continuous paradigm in America of how we look at the impacts of disparity created by Jim Crow and racism. For people who've come here in the last 60 years since the Civil Rights Act ... they come here oftentimes buying the stereotype that Black people are just lazy and that's why they're poor. They [Black people] don't care about education, and that's why they don't get good grades. They [people who have come here in the last 60 years] don't have a clue of the historic vestiges of oppression that keep people from being able to achieve at an equal level. That education is a difficult one when you're talking about [redistricting] somebody's child ... I'm thinking now about one particular very outspoken member of our committee who was like, "I moved here so that my kids could go to this school." Basically, what he was saying is, "I don't care what you grew up in and what your parents had to deal with, I'm here now with my kids and I want my kids at this school."

In addition to illustrating tension between committee members of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, this quote also foreshadows the staunch opposition to redistricting from many Asian parents in the county during the enactment phase.

Qualitative data also suggest that the majority of AAC members pressed the superintendent to not “plac[e] the burden [of redistricting] on the backs of students with the most need” (Attendance Area Committee Draft Report;). One AAC member who participated in an interview spoke to this priority, and indicated that the superintendent incorporated their feedback in his recommendation. He explained:

It’s not fair to expect the students, the free and reduced meal students, to be the ones to have to move. Let’s move in both directions. If we’re going to look at equity, let’s move both directions. We met with the superintendent and really were very clear about the expectation that this wouldn’t be a one-directional move, but that real equity meant shifts in both directions. That’s what he then came and presented. That raised the ire of the people who didn’t want to move.

Indeed, the superintendent claimed that his recommended redistricting plan led with equity by prioritizing desegregation and by moving students from both low-income schools in and around Columbia and wealthier schools in the western part of the county. Yet, as this AAC member indicated, his recommendation upset many community members—especially those whose children were enrolled in wealthier schools. The superintendent’s recommendation, and community members’ responses to it, are discussed later in this chapter and in the following chapter.

Attendance Area Committee Members’ Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Attendance Area Committee members had one clear source of power: a direct line of communication to Superintendent Michael Martirano as he developed his recommended redistricting plan. As noted, several AAC members used their positions on the committee to advocate for redistricting in a way that more evenly distributed low-income and wealthy students

across schools. Yet, interview and documentary data suggest that the AAC was hamstrung in their capacity to influence the superintendent by the board's recent updates to Policy 6010. For example, changes to Policy 6010 made in 2018 shortened the time AAC members had to discuss redistricting priorities and the superintendent's recommendation, and did away with the AAC's ability to develop its own redistricting plan. The shortened deliberation time for the AAC meant that they only met four times before the superintendent presented his recommended redistricting plan to the board. As one AAC member explained, "four meetings, two hours each was not much time to have an impact." School board documents indicated that the board modified the scope of the AAC to "allow more time for board discussion and deliberation" (Superintendent's Attendance Area Adjustment Plan). In other words, it appeared that these policy changes aimed to limit the power of the AAC—which was, in theory, an extension of the community—and give more power to the school board. But beyond a power grab, they may have also made these changes to insulate AAC members from political resistance from community members, given that—as described in the previous chapter—AAC members who proposed their own redistricting plan in 2017 were harassed by parents who did not want their children to be redistricted.

Furthermore, the ostensible purpose of the AAC—to allow community members from across Howard County to have a say in the superintendent's redistricting recommendation—was undermined by the fact that the superintendent *hand-picked* AAC members. While AAC members claimed that the committee was "diverse," they also acknowledged that its members heavily favored redistricting to desegregate schools. The committee's top priority—equity—did not align with most Feasibility Study survey respondents' top priorities—minimizing travel time and maintaining community stability. The dissonance between these two groups' goals suggests that the AAC may not have been representative of Howard County community members writ

large. On the contrary, it may have granted desegregation advocates more power to influence the superintendent's recommendation. Moreover, as described in the next chapter, the superintendent's recommendation was just that—a *recommendation*. Per Policy 6010, the school board had the power to accept, modify, or disregard his proposed redistricting plan. Thus, any form of community participation in the initiation process should be seen as preliminary and not necessarily authoritative.

Given the short time of the AAC's involvement in redistricting, there is little evidence of how committee members' political skill and will influenced the superintendent's recommendation. However, the several AAC members who had served on prior years' committees or had been involved with the district in other ways may have had more knowledge of AAC and HCPSS procedures, and, consequently, more potential to influence redistricting. For example, one AAC member—whose first time serving on an HCPSS committee was the 2019 AAC—described how he had a greater “learning curve” than some other members. He suggested that, as a result, he spent more time on the sidelines of AAC meetings. In his words:

It's like with any [committee], you have some people that definitely come in with certain ... agendas. Some of it, I would say, was because they've been involved in more of these types of initiatives than I have been. ... I think in some respects, my learning curve was bigger than theirs, so I probably did more watching and listening, whereas others probably might've been more vocal because of their personal experience.

Additionally, the fact that AAC members accepted the superintendent's invitation to join the committee suggests that they had at least some will to influence the policy process. Furthermore, committee members' advocacy for desegregation during AAC meetings and to the superintendent himself suggests their willingness to advance their policy goals.

The Howard County Council

While Howard County Councilmembers had no formal authority over the redistricting process, they too tried to influence the superintendent as he developed his recommended redistricting plan. The council included five members who represented five districts in the county. Liz Walsh, a White woman, represented District 1, a predominantly White and Asian district covering northern and eastern parts of Howard County. Opel Jones, a Black man, represented District 2—a racially/ethnically diverse district on the eastern side of the county, including parts of east Columbia. Christiana Rigby, a White woman who chaired the council in 2019, represented District 3, another diverse district that covered parts of Columbia and southeastern Howard County. Deb Jung, a White woman, represented District 4, a predominantly White and Asian district that includes western Columbia and parts of western Howard County. Finally, David Yungmann, a White man, represented District 5, a predominantly White area in the rural western part of the county.

The council's policy goals with regard to redistricting became evident in August 2019—one week before the superintendent was scheduled to present his recommended redistricting plan at a school board meeting—when councilmembers Christiana Rigby, Opel Jones, and Deb Jung announced that they were going to introduce a county resolution, CR-112, that called on HCPSS to address existing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation through redistricting. While the council had no formal authority over the redistricting process, they used the press release in an attempt to nudge the superintendent and school board toward advancing a redistricting plan that would desegregate schools. Councilmembers' decisions to announce CR-112 just before the superintendent's presentation demonstrated their political skill to deploy what little power they had over redistricting, and the fact that they announced and drafted a resolution calling for

desegregation indicated their willingness to influence the policy process. Their choice to insert themselves into the redistricting conversation was notable, particularly given that the policy had the potential to desegregate schools but, as the Feasibility Study options made clear, was not necessarily required to do so.

Announcing a County Resolution Calling for School Desegregation

One week before Superintendent Michael Martirano was scheduled to present his redistricting recommendation, councilmembers Rigby, Jones, and Jung—all of whom represented areas of Columbia—announced that they would soon introduce a county resolution calling on HCPSS to use redistricting to desegregate schools. The joint press release stated that “school district boundaries in Howard County are drawn in a manner that concentrate students participating in the Free and Reduced Meals program [FARMs] into certain elementary, middle, and high schools” (Nocera, 2019g). Council Chair Rigby said in an interview with *The Baltimore Sun*, “we have an opportunity now to balance capacity [utilization], and to better balance our FARMs capacity in all our schools” (Nocera, 2019c). Interview data confirmed that the intent of the resolution, CR-112, was to encourage redistricting for desegregation. One councilmember said the resolution was introduced in an effort to ensure that the superintendent and school board did not advance redistricting plans that would concentrate poverty in particular schools, as had been done in the past. In this councilmember’s words:

[We] felt like everything’s been tried to try and get them [the school board and district] to consider equity ... and it never seems to work. ... And so [we] thought, well, what if we do a resolution, and we just say “these are our values, this is important to us. Please, we hope you [the school board and district] agree with us.” ... It’s just a resolution. It’s not binding. It just says how you feel. ... So [we] really thought this would be an

opportunity to say, “hey, when you redistrict, please consider these factors, especially in light of the previous approach.”

This councilmember also indicated that the timing of the press release about CR-112, which came out a week before the superintendent’s presentation, was intentional. In short, the councilmembers who introduced CR-112 wanted the superintendent to know that they supported desegregation, and they wanted him to support it as well. This councilmember thought the superintendent would be receptive to redistricting for desegregation because he had been receptive to it in past conversations:

We basically made it [CR-112] known prior to the superintendent’s release of this plan, because we wanted him to know, like, “Hey, this is important to this group of elected leaders who are also parents.” ... Really, we were hoping to just raise the issue, to make the point. ... Back when Dr. Martirano started ... I sort of came together with this diverse group ... who wanted to focus on diversity in our schools. And we met with Dr. Martirano and we expressed these concerns [about school segregation], and he really seemed receptive and open and listening.

The councilmember also thought several school board members would support CR-112 because equity was a central component of their election campaign: “I really thought, okay, all these folks [on the school board] are saying they value equity ... so let’s do it.”

Councilmembers told some school board members about the resolution the day the press release went out, but they did not tell the superintendent or any board members about the press release itself before it was published (Nocera, 2019d). One news article reported that, based on evidence from emails obtained through a Maryland Public Information Act request, “Martirano and most of the school board members were blindsided by the release” (Nocera, 2019h). In

another email from superintendent to the school board obtained through a Maryland Public Information Act request, Martirano wrote, “to say I was surprised to see the press release ... was an understatement” (Nocera, 2019d).

Board Chair Mavis Ellis wrote a statement in support of the forthcoming county resolution, CR-112, shortly after the press release came out. Her statement read:

I support this resolution that focuses on the socioeconomic and racial desegregation of Howard County Public Schools. Many have called for equity, and it’s the Board of Education’s hard decisions that will make equity happen for all students in Howard County (Nocera, 2019d).

While no other board members or the superintendent released a statement in response to the press release, the councilmember I interviewed suggested that, for the most part, they “didn’t appreciate it.” This councilmember thought board members and the superintendent were concerned that news of a resolution calling for school desegregation—especially when it came the week before the superintendent shared his recommended redistricting plan—would create an unnecessary and unhelpful uproar in the community. The councilmember explained, “I think that the board members, because they were so much closer to it [redistricting], probably were worried about how much heat and volume, how much reaction it [the resolution] would generate.” Additionally, the councilmember explained that the superintendent thought the county council overstepped its bounds with the press release and resolution, even though the school board regularly took stances on council matters:

The superintendent definitely didn’t appreciate it [CR-112], I would say ... because of the heat, and also, I think he sort of felt like, “why are you getting involved here?” ... The Board of Education loves to get involved in land-use policy with the county—like,

they take votes on our bills and positions—but it’s only ever allowed to flow one way. ... So the superintendent ... was not wild about it [CR-112], because it complicated it [redistricting].”

In sum, it appeared that most school board members and the superintendent were displeased that councilmembers Christiana Rigby, Opel Jones, and Deb Jung were trying to insert themselves into the redistricting process through CR-112. As discussed in the next chapter, the community’s fiery response to the resolution—which was introduced during the enactment phase of redistricting—validated board members’ and the superintendent’s concerns that CR-112 would “complicate” the redistricting process.

Howard County Councilmembers’ Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Because the Howard County Council had no formal authority over redistricting, they had limited sources of power to influence the policy process. In the initiation phase, several councilmembers attempted to influence the process by shaping the narrative about redistricting; they did so by releasing a statement about their forthcoming resolution just before the superintendent presented his recommended redistricting plan. Through their press release, councilmembers intended to encourage the superintendent to prioritize desegregation in his recommendation, and to encourage the board to prioritize it in the plan they would eventually enact. It was possible that councilmembers’ call to desegregate would influence the superintendent’s and board members’ decisions, particularly because shedding light on segregation threatened the district’s legitimacy as an equity-oriented institution in a community with a history of integration. It was also possible that the superintendent and school board would incorporate councilmembers’ policy goals into redistricting because HCPSS receives most of its funding from the council; the mere threat of the council withholding funding from the district

could have been enough to make the superintendent and board members listen. Yet, as described in the previous chapter, councilmembers viewed school funding as a duty rather than a point of leverage. To be sure, the county council possessed the power to legislate. However, as evidenced in the enactment phase, their power to legislate *school redistricting* was purely symbolic. Thus, the council ultimately had few resources at their disposal to encourage desegregation.

Although little evidence addressed councilmembers' political skill during the initiation phase, the timing of their press release about CR-112 suggested that they were aware of the redistricting timeline and procedures and recognized that announcing the resolution before the superintendent's presentation would at least give them a chance at shaping the factors he prioritized in his recommendation. Additionally, the fact that councilmembers Christiana Rigby, Opel Jones, and Deb Jung created the press release—and went on to introduce the resolution—suggests that they had the political will to influence the redistricting process.

The Superintendent's Recommended Redistricting Plan

HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano presented his recommended redistricting plan at a school board meeting on August 22nd, 2019. He claimed that his plan diverged from prior redistricting efforts by prioritizing equity, in alignment with the district's Strategic Call to Action, entitled "Learning and Leading with Equity." At the beginning of his presentation, the superintendent said:

This recommendation marks a turning point in how we look at attendance area adjustments. While previous boundary review processes focused more narrowly on capacity utilization, my proposal is in alignment with our Strategic Call to Action, leading with equity as our driver to provide all students with full access and opportunity to receive the best educational services and supports (HCPSS News, 2019).

In particular, Superintendent Martirano argued that his recommended redistricting plan would advance socioeconomic equity “by addressing the proportion among schools of students receiving FARM program services” (HCPSS News, 2019). In other words, it would reduce socioeconomic segregation. Martirano indicated that his plan would reduce FRPM rates at many elementary, middle, and high schools and increase FRPM rates at others, which would bring them closer to the county average. For example, the number of elementary schools with FRPM rates at or below 54%⁸ was projected to decrease from 12 to six under Martirano’s plan. His recommended plan also proposed sending hundreds of students from River Hill High School—which was predominantly White, Asian, and wealthy—to Wilde Lake High School—which was predominantly Black, Hispanic, and low-income—and vice versa. Martirano followed his discussion of how FRPM rates would change under his plan by emphasizing research that demonstrates the benefits of school diversity. He explained:

Children who have the opportunity to interact with classmates and experience communities that may be different from their own, gain tremendous benefits. These benefits impact *all* students, not only those who are more disadvantaged. ... In HCPSS schools, we are all part of one community ... we need to give students a chance to grow up with one another. This work truly represents equity in action.

Thus, a central component of Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan was reducing socioeconomic segregation in schools, which he referred to as “advancing equity” (Attendance Area Adjustment Recommendation). This goal aligned with HCPSS General Counsel Mark Blom’s suggestions that the district *could* and *should* use redistricting as a tool to desegregate schools by socioeconomic status. Indeed, some documentary data suggested that the

⁸ This percentage is according to HCPSS data.

superintendent incorporated information from Blom’s presentation on school diversity initiatives into his recommended plan.

Superintendent Martirano also claimed that a commitment to equity motivated his recommendations *not* to redistrict some FRPM students. For example, in his presentation, he addressed Stevens Forest Elementary School in Columbia, which had one of the highest FRPM rates in the district at the time. Martirano said that his recommended plan reduced the FRPM rate at Stevens Forest, but did not do so dramatically because moving low-income students from Stevens Forest to a school farther away “would disenfranchise many parents in their ability to stay connected to the school,” especially if the family lacked a car (Attendance Area Adjustment Recommendation). He further explained that, for schools that serve high percentages of low-income students, “the most important priority may be to intensify supports for students who remain at the school, but not to move a large percentage of students whose families would otherwise not be able to participate” (Attendance Area Adjustment Recommendation).

In addition to reducing socioeconomic segregation, Martirano’s recommended plan also purported to address school capacity issues, which was the reason the school board voted to redistrict in the first place. Specifically, Martirano claimed that his plan would reduce enrollment in overcrowded schools and increasing enrollment in under-enrolled schools. For example, capacity utilization at the district’s most overcrowded high school—Howard—was projected to decrease from 136% to 119%. Similarly, capacity utilization at Bryant Woods Elementary School, which was overcrowded and had a high concentration of low-income students, was projected to decrease from 125% to 108%. Martirano’s plan would also bring Oakland Mills High School—which the district had kept under-enrolled in past redistricting decisions—closer to 100%.

Notably, Superintendent Martirano acknowledged that his recommended plan did not, and could not, fulfill all criteria in Policy 6010—capacity utilization, community stability, and school diversity—equally. In his words, “there is no perfect proposal. Neither this plan, nor any plan can simultaneously accomplish everything we all want” (Attendance Area Adjustment Recommendation). Yet, Martirano suggested that his plan “moves us forward across all of our driving priorities for this process” (Attendance Area Adjustment Recommendation).

Interview participants generally thought the superintendent was trying to desegregate schools through his recommended redistricting plan. For example, HCPSS parents from across the county said that the superintendent was “trying to advance equity ... really trying to lift all boats,” “trying to do what he could to break up the poverty,” and “trying to redistribute FARMs [students].” One parent believed that the superintendent’s recommended plan reflected Columbia’s founding ideals of diversity and integration. She said, “I think the superintendent’s plan was developed with those ideals, very much Columbia ideas, and what Columbia was built on as the value system.” Several parents also thought Martirano was trying to balance school capacity—that is, redistribute students to relieve overcrowded schools and increase enrollment at under-enrolled schools—but do so in a way that addressed growing socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS. For instance, one AAC member thought Martirano’s experience as a low-income student himself, which he had often shared with community members, motivated him to address segregation through redistricting. He explained:

At the end of the day, I think he [Martirano] really wanted to balance the [capacity of] schools and do it in a way that he thought was fair and equitable to the majority. He’s shared the story at times growing up as a kid that didn’t have a whole lot, and being a Free and Reduced Meal kid. In some respects, I think he had a personal understanding of

what it's like to depend on public support by way of government intervention. I think in his case, it was just a matter of looking at, the schools need to be rebalanced, and how can we do this in a way that doesn't put all of the well-to-do, highly resourced kids in school together and put all of the kids that need additional support together.

Similarly, an HCPSS parent believed "it was capacity that was driving the [superintendent's] plan, but equity was there to say, 'Well, you can't put a burden on a few schools in Columbia,' because that's what has been happening forever." Another AAC member also thought the superintendent was trying to alleviate overcrowding while reducing segregation, which prior superintendents and school boards had not done. In her words, "I certainly believed that he [Martirano] wanted to favor integration, diversity, not more than overcrowding but more than it may have been favored at other times." Quantitative findings, discussed in the following section, also suggest that the superintendent wanted to desegregate schools.

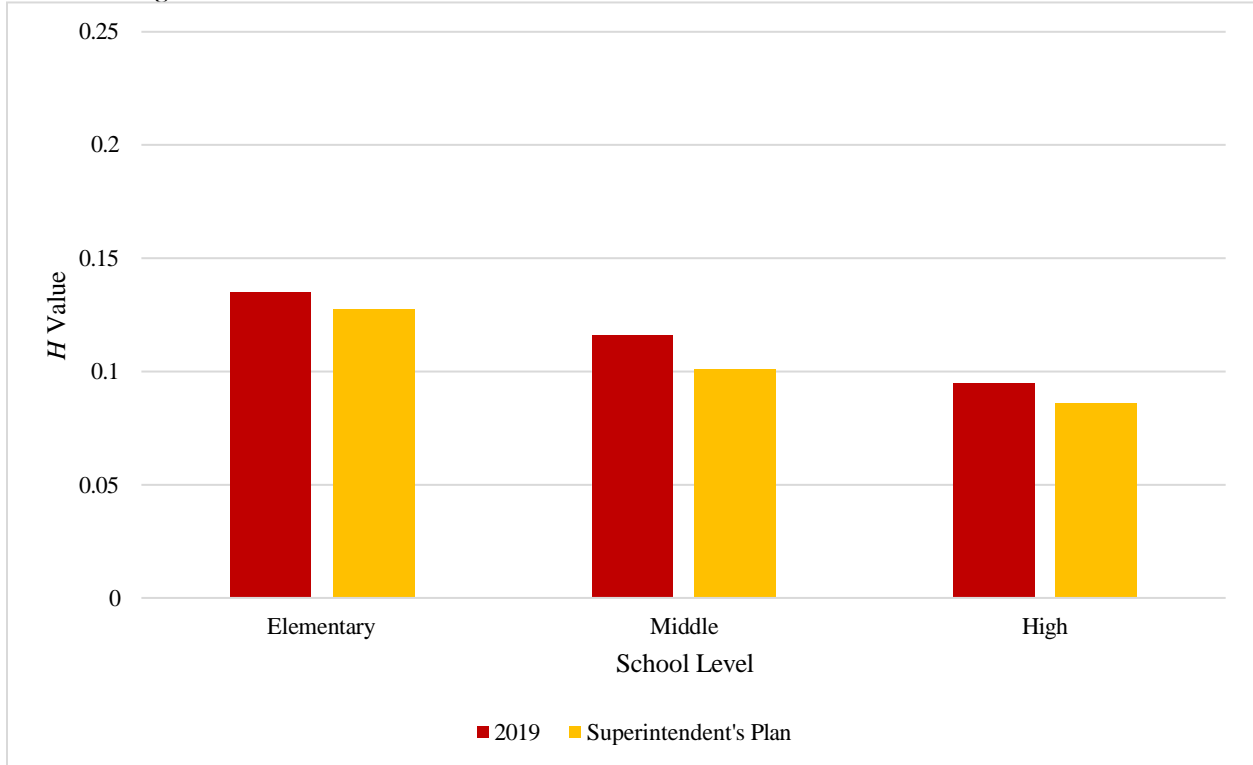
Prospects for Reduced Segregation under the Superintendent's Recommendation

Overall, the superintendent's plan's prospects for reducing segregation were much more favorable than those stemming from the Feasibility Study options. His recommendation projected lower racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation at most school levels compared to 2019 segregation rates, but reductions would have been the most dramatic for socioeconomic segregation at the elementary and middle school levels. Furthermore, his plan had the potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation both in terms of the evenness of the distribution of students across HCPSS, as measured by H , and in terms of interactions between racially/ethnically minoritized and White students and FRPM students and non-FRPM students, as measured by the interaction index.

As shown in Figure 7 (Appendix E), Superintendent Martirano's recommended redistricting plan was projected to more evenly distribute Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students across HCPSS at all school levels, relative to corresponding 2019 rates. In other words, implementing his proposed plan could have increased the racial/ethnic diversity of schools such that they more closely resembled the racial/ethnic diversity of the district. Projected racial/ethnic segregation rates at elementary and middle school levels were 0.13 and 0.10, respectively, which fall on the low end of moderate segregation range (Reardon & Yun, 2003). Projected racial/ethnic segregation at the high school level was 0.09, which falls in the low range (Reardon & Yun, 2003).

Implementing Martirano's recommended plan could have also increased interactions between Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students across HCPSS. For the most part, interaction rates between students of different racial/ethnic groups were projected to increase or remain the same (Appendix G). The only exceptions were that Black and White students' exposure to Hispanic students, and White students' exposure to Asian students, were projected to decrease slightly. Increases were most dramatic for interactions between Hispanic and White students; this finding held for all school levels. For example, in 2019, the exposure rate between Hispanic and White elementary school students was 55%, which indicates that the average Hispanic elementary school student attended a school that was 55% White. Under the superintendent's recommendation, the average Hispanic elementary school student would have attended a school that was 62% White. This projected increase is substantial; however, just 33% of HCPSS elementary school students in 2019 were White. Thus, in 2019 and under the superintendent's plan, Hispanic students were exposed to White students at disproportionately high rates, relative to the percentage of White students in the district.

Figure 7. Projected Racial/Ethnic Segregation for the Superintendent’s Recommended Redistricting Plan



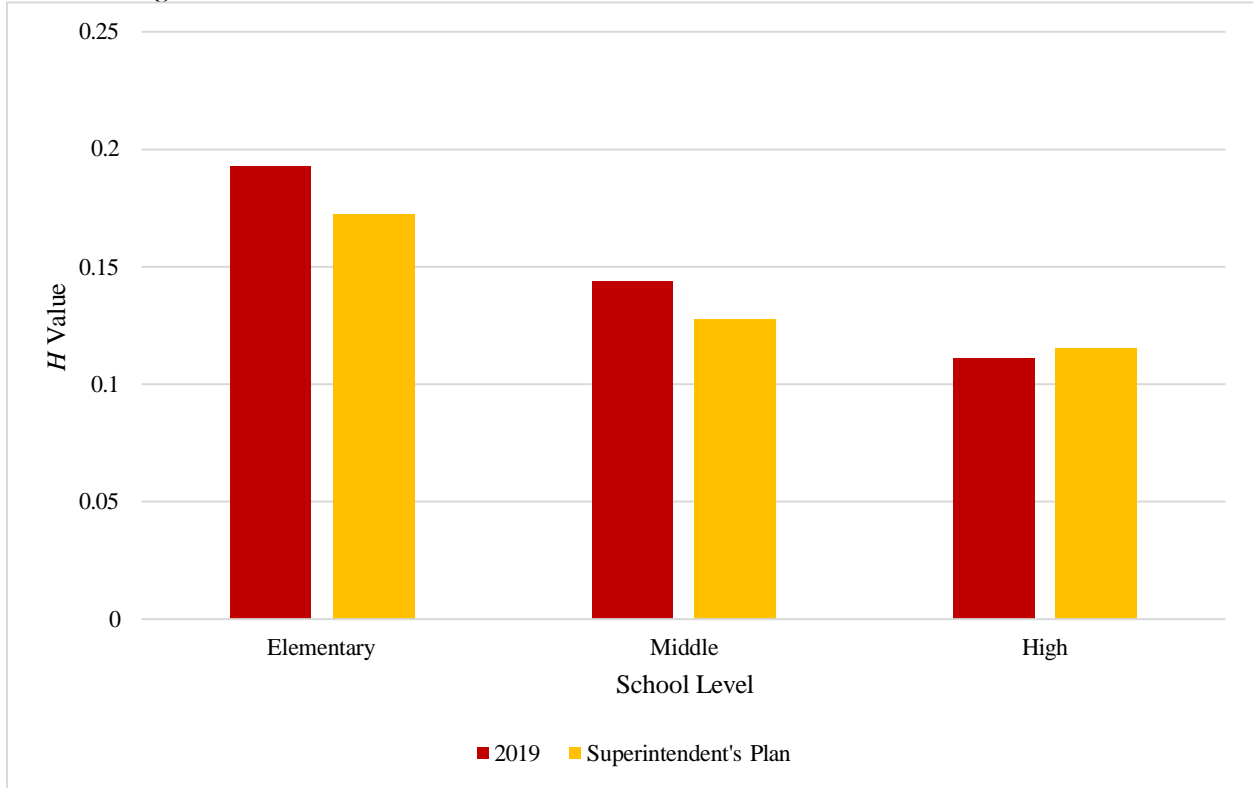
Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

Figure 8 (Appendix F) demonstrates the projected socioeconomic segregation of HCPSS students under the superintendent’s recommendation relative to 2019 rates. Given that socioeconomic segregation was higher than racial/ethnic segregation across the district—both in terms of how evenly distributed students of different groups were, and in terms of how often minoritized students interacted with non-minoritized students—it was perhaps more *challenging* and more *imperative* for proposed redistricting plans to address. For the most part, the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan appeared up to the task. Socioeconomic segregation as measured by H was highest at the elementary and middle school levels. Under the superintendent’s plan, the distribution of FRPM and non-FRPM students in elementary and middle schools was projected to become more even. At the elementary level, H decreased to 0.17 (from 0.19 in 2019); at the middle level, H decreased to 0.13 (from 0.14 in 2019). At both levels,

socioeconomic segregation would have remained within the moderate range. Overall, these findings suggest that implementing the superintendent's plan could have brought FRPM rates at elementary and middle schools closer to corresponding district averages. In contrast, H increased at the high school level, if only slightly. Segregation at this level would have remained on the low end of the moderate range (0.12).

Results from the interaction index (Appendix H) paint a more complicated picture of the superintendent's plan's prospects for reducing socioeconomic segregation. While socioeconomic segregation conceptualized as the *distribution* of FRPM and non-FRPM students across schools would have decreased at most school levels, segregation conceptualized as the *exposure* of FRPM students to non-FRPM students would have increased at all school levels. The exposure of FRPM students to non-FRPM students was projected to decrease slightly at the elementary school level and more dramatically at middle and high school levels. For example, in 2019, the average FRPM high school student in HCPSS attended a school where 75% of students did not receive FRPM. Under the superintendent's plan, that number would have decreased to 69%. Given that non-FRPM students were 83% of HCPSS's high school population in 2019, this finding suggests that implementing the superintendent's plan could have reduced interactions between FRPM and non-FRPM students that were already disproportionately low. But these seemingly conflicting results between H and the interaction index may result from the fact that the superintendent's plan redistricted more non-FRPM students than FRPM students. The superintendent's plan would have *increased* the rate at which non-FRPM students interacted with FRPM students at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Put differently, under the superintendent's plan, non-FRPM students would have attended schools with higher percentages of FRPM students than they did in 2019. It is possible that the superintendent's plan would have

Figure 8. Projected Socioeconomic Segregation for the Superintendent’s Recommended Redistricting Plan



Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

increased non-FRPM students’ exposure to FRPM students, but decreased FRPM students’ exposure to non-FRPM students, because his plan would have moved more non-FRPM students to new schools than FRPM students. Indeed, as described, qualitative data suggest that the superintendent heeded AAC members’ suggestions to “move in both directions,” meaning to reassign both low- and high-income students to new schools. Thus, the superintendent’s plan may have, indeed, reduced socioeconomic segregation in terms of both H and the interaction index, but done so largely by redistricting non-FRPM students.

Overall, the superintendent’s plan had the potential to reduce both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. First, his plan projected to distribute Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White students and FRPM and non-FRPM students more evenly across the district. In other words, under the superintendent’s plan, schools’ diversity would have resembled the district’s

diversity more closely. The only exception was the distribution of FRPM and non-FRPM students at the high school level, which the superintendent's plan would have made slightly less even. Second, the superintendent's plan would have increased interactions between students of most racial/ethnic groups. However, the plan was projected to decrease the rate at which FRPM students were exposed to non-FRPM students. Generally speaking, though, the superintendent's plan was a better option for reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation than the Feasibility Study plans. This finding makes sense, given that the Feasibility Study options prioritized reducing overcrowding at the expense of reducing segregation, while the superintendent tried to prioritize both factors. Taken together with qualitative data about the superintendent's policy goals for redistricting, this evidence suggests that the superintendent did, indeed, want to redistrict to desegregate schools.

Superintendent's Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Superintendent Michael Martirano garnered power to influence the initiation phase of the redistricting policy process through Policy 6010, which granted him the ability to develop and share a recommended redistricting plan with the school board and community. Furthermore, Policy 6010 granted Superintendent Martirano the power to appoint community members to the Attendance Area Committee, which provided input as he developed his recommendation. Generally, Martirano had the power to appoint AAC members from whom he *wanted* input—that is, whose policy goals aligned with his own.

After the Feasibility Study options, Martirano's plan was the first to be considered by the school board. Thus, he had the opportunity to set the tone of the redistricting process by suggesting a plan that prioritized the factors he wanted to prioritize—in this case, school diversity and capacity. But Martirano's *formal* power to shape redistricting priorities started and

ended there. After presenting his recommendation to the board, Policy 6010 banished the superintendent to the sidelines of redistricting; it was now in board members' hands. And as the next chapter explains, the superintendent did not seem to play a significant role in the enactment phase of redistricting *informally* either.

Yet, Superintendent Martirano deployed his limited power resources skillfully. Qualitative evidence suggests that the superintendent was skillful in the *manner* in which and the *time* at which he proposed redistricting for desegregation. First, I identified few instances across documentary, interview, and observational data where the superintendent used the words “segregation” or “desegregation.” Instead, he referred to “equity,” a term that is both race-neutral and vague, and, consequently, less likely to garner attention than “desegregation,” a redistributive policy that is often associated with race—both of which are controversial in American culture. When I asked one Black AAC member why the superintendent avoided using terms like “segregation” and “desegregation” when discussing his recommended redistricting plan, he replied, “let me say that, considering the environment of America ... adding words like ‘race’ and ‘desegregation’ would have been triggers, would have been throwing gasoline on a fire.” In sum, it appeared that the superintendent intentionally avoided terms that he thought would be controversial, perhaps because doing so would make school board and community members more likely to endorse his recommendation. However, county councilmembers’ introduction of CR-112—which addressed the history of slavery and segregation and the need for racial/ethnic desegregation in Howard County—in the next phase of redistricting seemed to undermine the superintendent’s efforts to make his recommendation appeal to the masses.

Second, qualitative data suggested that it was the right time to propose a redistricting plan for desegregation, and he was the right person to do so. In terms of timing, both racial/ethnic and

socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS had been steadily increasing over the last decade, and prior policies and redistricting efforts had done nothing to help. As described in the previous chapter, many community members noticed the growing segregation and wanted the district to do something about it. One elected official thought the superintendent recognized perceived need for desegregation in HCPSS, much of which stemmed from the Elementary School Model implemented by the prior superintendent, which concentrated low-income students in several Columbia schools. She explained, “I think the superintendent understood some of those challenges, like the previous superintendent’s proposal of concentrate poverty, concentrate resources, but then future boards removed the resources and didn't deconcentrate poverty.” Another interview participant, who was on the AAC, suggested that the superintendent knew that at least some community members would support his efforts to desegregate. In his words, “the mood of the county ... aligned to make it the right time.” Additionally, one HCPSS parent thought the superintendent recognized that failing to address segregation could have threatened HCPSS’s legitimacy, both in terms of exposing inequities in a district that claims equity is a leading value and making them vulnerable to a lawsuit. This parent explained:

I think he was afraid that not taking equity into account might be worse of a PR thing. I mean, if you look at the national news, we get a lot of attention here in Howard County. ... He knew that people were watching.

Thus, while Superintendent Martirano recognized that he had some support to advance desegregation, he likely also recognized the looming threat to HCPSS if segregation persisted.

Furthermore, several Black interview participants who held leadership roles in the county believed that the superintendent’s social and professional privilege, as a White man who was well-established in his career, made him the right HCPSS superintendent to propose a potentially

controversial redistricting plan. For example, one Black community member explained Martirano's privileged position by comparing him to Sydney Cousin, HCPSS's first Black superintendent. He explained:

The reality of America is, when you're the first African American in a position, you are walking on eggshells with what you can and can't do. Dr. Sydney Cousin, the first Black superintendent, was a great person, very committed to equity, but ... I don't think he was in a position at that time to really push for equity in the way that we're able to do 20 years later.

Another Black community member argued that Martirano was able to propose the plan he did because he was "at a good place in [his] career." In his words:

I think in his [Martirano's] case ... it was probably easier for him to do it, because ... he was on the tail end of his career. ... I think it was a case of the right person to take this on because of where they were in their career. He's been a state superintendent. He was a superintendent in St. Mary's County. He's been there and done that.

For these reasons, participants thought Superintendent Martirano was the right man for the job.

In addition to political skill, Superintendent Martirano also demonstrated strong political will to use redistricting as a tool to desegregate schools. Both qualitative and quantitative data suggest that the superintendent wanted to prioritize desegregation. For example, the superintendent described his recommended plan as "equity in action," and results from most *H* and interaction analyses suggest that his plan would have reduced racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation at most levels for most groups. Likewise, the superintendent appointed Attendance Area Committee members who, like him, wanted to desegregate HCPSS

schools. Altogether, this evidence suggests his desire to advance a redistricting plan with the potential to advance desegregation.

Chapter Summary: Gauging Influence in the Initiation Phase

After reviewing Superintendent Michael Martirano’s proposed redistricting plan, and its prospects for reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, the degree to which various policy actors influenced his recommendation becomes clearer. I gauged actors’ influence during the initiation phase by assessing the degree to which their policy goals aligned with the potential outcomes of Martirano’s recommendation, assessing their sources of power, and identifying instances where actors were excluded from the redistricting process. Overall, the superintendent appeared to have the most influence over redistricting in the initiation phase, and community members—especially those who were low-income—appeared to have the least influence.

Alignment between Policy Goals and Potential Outcomes

Superintendent Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan aligned most closely with his own policy goals in that, for the most part, it was projected to reduce both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. This finding is unsurprising, given that it was, indeed, the *superintendent’s* recommendation. However, the prospects of his recommended plan also align with the policy goals of most AAC members, who claimed that they valued equity and wanted the superintendent to prioritize desegregation, and the three county councilmembers who announced that they would soon introduce CR-112, a resolution calling for HCPSS to desegregate. On the other hand, the superintendent’s plan’s prospects aligned with just a small number of community members who submitted responses to the Feasibility Study survey. The majority of survey respondents advocated for a redistricting plan that would minimize travel time to school and maintain community stability—which, to many of them, meant minimizing the

number of students moved. The superintendent's plan proposed redistricting over 7,000 students and admittedly prioritized "equity," defined as reducing segregation, over those community members' top priorities. Thus, using this strategy to gauge influence, it appears that AAC members and county councilmembers influenced the superintendent's recommendation more than community members. Even so, because Superintendent Martirano's policy goals aligned so closely with the prospects, or potential outcomes, of his recommendation, it is possible that AAC members' and councilmembers' influence efforts were merely background noise to the superintendent. Indeed, one 2019 news article reported that, when asked if he modified his recommended redistricting plan in response to councilmembers' announcements of the impending CR-112, Martirano said "absolutely not" (Nocera, 2019af).

Sources of Power

Most policy actors who attempted to influence redistricting in the initiation phase had limited sources of power to do so. Community members had pathways through Policy 6010 to share their priorities for redistricting with the superintendent, but the superintendent did not appear to weigh their feedback heavily when developing his recommendation. Councilmembers also had limited sources of power, particularly given that they had no formal authority over the redistricting process. Yet, their political skill—particularly the timing with which they announced CR-112—may have helped them to maximize what little power they had. In contrast, AAC members were granted some formal power over the redistricting process through their direct line of communication to the superintendent. But even some AAC members recognized that their roles were relatively symbolic: while they were community representatives, they were *hand-selected* by the superintendent, and they only met four times to provide feedback on potential redistricting plans. The actor with the most power over redistricting during the initiation

phase was Superintendent Martirano, who had the ability to develop and share his own recommended redistricting plan.

Exclusion of Actors

Documentary data suggest that thousands of Howard County community members attempted to influence what the superintendent prioritized in his recommended redistricting plan by responding to the Feasibility Study survey or participating on the AAC. However, it is unclear whether low-income community members had the opportunity to partake in these influence efforts to the same degree that their wealthier neighbors did. For example, the AAC's draft report indicated that no AAC members were low-income, as defined by whether their children had received or were receiving Free or Reduced-Price Meals in school. Given that the superintendent's proposed plan aimed to help low-income families—either by redistricting them out of their schools or redistricting other students into their schools in an effort to balance FRPM rates across the district—this group of policy actors was a very important one to include in the policy process. As evidenced in the next chapter, the degree to which the district included low-income families in the redistricting process—or excluded them from the process—did not appear to change in the enactment phase.

Chapter 7: The Enactment Phase of Redistricting

The enactment phase of redistricting spanned from August 2019, when Superintendent Michael Martirano presented his recommendations to the Howard County Board of Education, to November 2019, when the board voted to enact a finalized plan. During this phase, Howard County parents, students, and elected officials attempted to influence the school board's decision about the details of redistricting. At the same time, school board members were trying to influence *each other* to prioritize different factors, including overcrowding, community stability, and desegregation. This chapter analyzes their efforts in light of my conceptual model, identifying the *actors* involved, their *policy goals* and *sources of power*, and the *political skill* and *will* with which they deployed their resources. I also discuss how these actor-level political factors interacted with contextual and systemic dynamics to shape racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Ultimately, while a few county councilmembers and a small group of community members advocated for the school board to enact the superintendent's plan, which could have measurably desegregated schools, a swath of powerful and vocal community members from western Howard County persuaded school board members to abandon the superintendent's plan and enact one that had less potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation.

Community Responses to the Superintendent's Recommended Redistricting Plan

After Superintendent Michael Martirano presented his recommended redistricting plan in a board meeting on August 22nd, 2019, community members flooded the Howard County Board of Education with written testimony that, for the most part, opposed the plan. In addition to accepting written testimony, the board had also scheduled three public hearings where community members could share their views on redistricting. The hearings were scheduled to

take place in September, before the board held “work sessions” in October to discuss attendance boundary adjustments. Community members used these hearings as an opportunity to try to influence board members’ decisions about whether and how to redistrict, including whether they would accept, modify, or disregard the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan. Each hearing was reserved for community members from specific attendance areas.

The first hearing was for families zoned to schools in Ellicott City—a community in the northeastern part of the county—and the eastern side of Columbia, including predominantly White and Asian schools that enrolled few low-income students, as well as Oakland Mills schools, which were predominantly Black, Hispanic, and low-income. Many schools included in this hearing were overcrowded, except for the Oakland Mills schools, which were generally under-enrolled. Of the 75 people who signed up to speak at this hearing, most were White and most were parents. The vast majority of speakers opposed the superintendent’s plan.

More speakers signed up for the second hearing, which included families zoned to Columbia schools that were generally more racially/ethnically diverse and served higher percentages of students receiving Free and Reduced-Price Meals (FRPM). While many families assigned to this hearing attended at or over capacity schools, there were also families from Wilde Lake High School and the elementary and middle schools that fed into it, which tended to be under-enrolled. Of the 97 individuals who signed up to testify, most were White or Asian, most were parents, and most opposed Superintendent Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan. However, several Black members of the Wilde Lake High School Parent-Teacher-Student Associated spoke in support of the plan, as did a number of students.

The third hearing was for families zoned to the predominantly White and Asian schools on the western side of the county, which served very low percentages of FRPM students.

Because these schools were located in lower density areas, most were at or under capacity. So many community members signed up to speak at this hearing that the school board opted to add *three* additional hearings, since it could not accommodate all who signed up to speak during the first scheduled hearing. Almost 400 people spoke over the course of the four hearings—about four times the number of people who spoke at each of the earlier hearings. The vast majority of speakers were Asian or White, and more students signed up to speak from this region of the county than any other; of the 108 speakers at the first hearing for this region, 83 were students, many of whom attended River Hill High School (Nocera, 2019z). Additionally, many speakers identified themselves as immigrants to the U.S., particularly from Asian countries. Across four nights of hearings for the final region, all speakers opposed the superintendent’s redistricting plan.

While attendees and attendance varied slightly at each hearing, the overarching message to board members was the same: *do not enact Superintendent Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan*. Interview participants also indicated that the majority of community members who testified opposed the plan. For example, one parent recalled how “it [Martirano’s plan] came out in the morning, and then by the end of the day, social media was flooded with negative commentary.” Participants across racial/ethnic backgrounds also suggested that Asian parents from River Hill were the “loudest” opponents of Martirano’s plan, which surprised them. For instance, one White parent who had served on HCPSS and school board committees for several years said, “the people who came out of west Howard County and the River Hill area, there’s a huge South Asian population that came out this time, which was a new thing.” As evidenced in the following sections, much of this group’s resistance was to being redistricted from River Hill High School—which was predominantly White, Asian, and wealthy—to Wilde Lake High

School—which was predominantly Black and Hispanic and served a much higher proportion of low-income students.

Opposition to the Superintendent’s Plan

Parents, students, and other Howard County community members who opposed the superintendent’s redistricting plan claimed that it was “inconvenient,” “misconceived,” “haphazard and ill-advised,” “too disruptive and radical,” and “absolutely reckless” (8/27 Written Testimony). These community members used a variety of strategies to convince the school board *not to* enact Martirano’s plan. At each public hearing, community members donned shirts that represented their current schools or signaled their opposition to the superintendent’s plan. For example, at the first hearing, many parents wore shirts that read, “Community and Equity: We shouldn’t have to choose” (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting). This slogan addressed two of the most salient competing priorities at play in redistricting: maintaining neighborhood schools and desegregating schools. At the second hearing, which included some segments of Pointers Run, a wealthy neighborhood of River Hill where many residents are White or Asian, parents donned tie-dye shirts that read, “Keep Pointers United in Redistricting” (9/24 Board of Education meeting). And at the third hearing, which included other parts of River Hill and western Howard County, parents and students wore shirts and held signs that read, “Keep 3176 and 176 at RHHS [River Hill High School],” “Keep Clarksville Middle Together,” and “River Hill United” (10/7/19, 10/10/19, 10/14/19, and 10/15/19 Board of Education meetings). Some parents even printed large maps of the county to try to demonstrate to board members how inconvenient the superintendent’s redistricting plan would be for them.

Influence strategies also included protests, petitions, and intimidation tactics. News articles documented several instances where hundreds of community members protested outside

the Howard County Board of Education headquarters prior to meetings (Nocera, 2019m; Nocera, 2019n; St. George, 2019). Many neighborhoods also submitted petitions. For example, one Pointers Run parent who participated in an interview described how several of her neighbors organized a group called “Pointers Run United” that collected signatures to oppose a move to Swansfield Elementary School, which was predominantly Black, Hispanic, and low-income. And while less common, some community members tried to intimidate the superintendent and board members to dissuade them from enacting the superintendent’s plan. For instance, a news article documented that a River Hill High School student posted a death threat to Superintendent Martirano on social media after he released his plan (Nocera, 2019g). Similarly, an interview participant recalled how “there was a rock thrown through the Board of Education’s door.”

Opponents of Superintendent Martirano’s plan also came together to form groups. For example, some parents created a Facebook group called “Howard County Neighbors United,” which thousands of parents would join. Parents also formed a coalition called Howard County Families for Education Improvement (FEI). As one interview participant described, FEI “formed to fight the plan.” The group described itself as “a diverse, broad-based community coalition whose members span all regions of Howard County” (HoCo Families for Education Improvement, n.d.). While FEI opposed the superintendent’s plan, the group claimed that they did not oppose redistricting to address overcrowding; their website reads, “We recognize the need to address overcrowding in HCPSS—and, support redistricting that would resolve this issue” (HoCo Families for Education Improvement, n.d.). The group organized several protests throughout the enactment phase, including one attended by roughly 4,000 community members (Dacey, 2019), and regularly posted statements about redistricting on their website. They even posted slogans that they had “approved” for FEI members to use at protests, which included:

“Help Don’t Harm Howard County Students,” “No to Proposed Redistricting Plan,” “Stop the Swap,” and “Kids before Politics” (HoCo Families for Education Improvement, n.d.). FEI opposed the superintendent’s redistricting plan for reasons shared by other community members, described in the following sections.

The most frequent influence strategy was to submit written testimony to school board members and other elected officials, including Howard County councilmembers and state delegates, and speaking at public hearings. Documentary, interview, and observational data suggested that these objections echoed earlier opposition to the Feasibility Study plans: speakers and writers argued that it would unnecessarily increase the time and distance students had to travel to school and would break apart communities, all while failing to reduce overcrowding or incorporate community input. But most people who submitted written testimony or spoke at a public hearing also acknowledged that Martirano’s plan aimed to advance equity in HCPSS. Rather than arguing against equity outright, they argued that the costs of his plan outweighed its benefits, and that educational equity would be best achieved through other policies—ones that did not require students to move to different and more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse schools. As one River Hill parent explained, “Like all of us, he [Superintendent Martirano] wants to create a more equitable school system. However, ... his plan is misguided and would do more harm than good” (9/3/19 Written Testimony). These comments aimed to refute Superintendent Martirano’s claim that his redistricting plan represented “equity in action.”

Increased Travel Time

One of the most prominent themes across written testimonies and public hearing comments was that the redistricting plan would unnecessarily increase the time students had to travel to get to school. Parents and students from across the county made this argument, but it

was an especially popular claim for parents and students who were proposed to be redistricted from River Hill to Wilde Lake. These community members cited many reasons why increased travel time was unnecessary and problematic, including that it would affect students' academic performance, limit their ability to participate in afterschool activities, raise transportation costs, and be unsafe for both students who had longer bus rides and students who drove longer distances to school.

Several parents claimed that increased travel time would negatively affect their children's academic performance by depriving them of much-needed sleep before school. For example, one community member wrote, "The commute time would double, which highly impacts high-school children's performance" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Similarly, a River Hill parent argued:

We live one mile from RHHS [River Hill High School] and we are being redistricted to WLHS [Wilde Lake High School], which is 6.3 miles from our house. We must pass through RHHS and travel five times more than our present travel time. ... Kids spend more time on unnecessary travel, wasting their valuable time. Less time for sleep and may not be able to concentrate on studies. Less time for stud[ies] and it may affect their grades and future prospects in life. (8/27/19 Written Testimony)

Parents and students also argued that longer travel times would prevent them from participating in extracurricular activities at their new schools. Another River Hill parent explained that "shuffling them [students] to much further away schools would make it harder for them to participate in afterschool sports and activities" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a 5th grade student from Clarksville, located in western Howard County, said, "It takes a long time to get to the assigned school, which is two times farther than Clarksville Middle School. This means I have less time for afterschool activities, fewer sleep hours, and less time to do my

homework” (9/2/19 Written Testimony). Community members also suggested that increased travel time would make it more difficult for parents to get to their children’s schools for extracurricular activities. One River Hill student wrote that superintendent’s plan “would make it harder for my parents to make the drive to pick me up from club meetings or sports practices. ... Consequently, my participation in school activities may be limited as compared to now” (8/27/19 Written Testimony). An Oakland Mills parent agreed, stating, “this new plan would make it harder for working parents to participate in their children’s school activities” (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Some community members also argued that increased travel time required more students to be bused, which meant higher costs for the district. One community member argued that Martirano’s plan was “fiscally unwise considering the recent cuts to the school budgets” (9/3/10 Written Testimony). Likewise, a Clarksville student said that the plan was “a senseless waste of time and money” (9/26/19 Board of Education meeting). Another parent from the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill argued that the district could use the money spent on transportation costs to hire para-educators instead, which would do more to support low-income students than desegregation would. In this parent’s words:

I started my career as a special educator, and I was lucky enough to have a para-educator who was incredible with the kids. She built amazing relationships with all students and they knew she genuinely cared about them. The cost of a para-educator per year is approximately \$27,000 while this plan’s transportation costs alone [are] approximately \$2.76 million. To me, it makes so much more sense to use this money to fund additional para-educator positions at lower performing schools in order to truly offer a support to students most in need. (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting)

This parent's call to "improve" low-income schools rather than desegregate them was popular with other Howard County families, as explained later in this chapter, and is a common refrain in the school desegregation literature (e.g., Ryan, 2010).

In addition, many parents and students argued that the superintendent's recommended plan was unsafe. First, many believed that Martirano's plan would increase the likelihood that students who drove to school would get into car accidents. For example, a River Hill student explained that, "If the plan goes through, I will be redistricted to Wilde Lake High School, which is a 20-minute drive and for a novice driver could be potentially unsafe" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Similarly, a community member argued that the proposal was "reckless" because it "exposes families for increased risks of traffic accidents" (9/3/19 Written Testimony). Second, some parents claimed that the longer bus rides stemmed from the superintendent's plan could be harmful for students who had motion sickness, allergies, or other medical conditions. For instance, one parent who identified himself as an "allergy specialist" said in an interview the *The Baltimore Sun* that parents of children with food allergies are "always terrified" that they will have an allergic reaction on the school bus; he added, "by increasing a bus ride from five to 40 minutes, you're increasing the risk of some adverse health event that is going to happen on the bus for medically fragile kids" (Nocera, 2019). Third, many parents and students argued that increased travel time would harm students by depriving them of the sleep they needed to succeed in school and lead a healthy life. Parents often cited empirical studies to make these points. For example, one River Hill parent wrote, "According to research, sleep deprivation can lead to teen depression and affect academic behavior. Getting less than seven hours of sleep on a regular basis can eventually lead to health consequences that affect your entire body" (9/2/19 Written Testimony). Similarly, another River Hill parent lamented the fact that children would lose time

to sleep for the purposes of balancing FRPM rates across the district's schools. This parent explained:

We are only 1.5 miles from RHHS, while WLHS is four miles away. ... The drive to RHHS is 15-20 minutes. In contrast, the drive to WLHS can easily take 35-40 minutes during rush hour. Can you imagine those sleep-deprived high school kids losing more sleep just to make the FARMs numbers look "better?" (8/27/19 Written Testimony)

In general, the parents, students, and other community members who opposed Superintendent Martirano's redistricting plan for travel-related reasons seemed to believe that those costs outweighed the potential benefits of desegregating schools. But given that most parents who expressed opposition to the superintendent's plan did not want their children to be redistricted from wealthy, predominantly White and Asian schools to lower-income, predominantly Black and Hispanic schools, the travel-related reasons they cited may have merely operated as a cloak for racism and classism.

Community Instability

Another prominent theme in the written testimonies and public hearings that followed Superintendent Martirano's presentation of his recommended redistricting plan was that his proposal would "tear apart" (8/27/19 Written Testimony) communities by sending students living in the same neighborhood to different schools. Parents argued that this disruption violated the community stability component of HCPSS's redistricting policy, Policy 6010; undermined Columbia founder James Rouse's intent to build tight-knit neighborhoods; forced families outside of the communities in which they chose to live; and would negatively impact children's social lives and development. Many who opposed the superintendent's plan for these reasons

were from River Hill and would have been redistricted to schools with higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students, like Wilde Lake High School.

Community members from River Hill and beyond wanted to “keep communities together” (8/28/19 Written Testimony), which in their view meant allowing children living in the same neighborhood to attend not only the same schools, but schools that were situated near or within their neighborhood. For example, one River Hill parent argued that “taking people from RHHS and sending them to Wilde Lake would destroy the communities at RHHS” (8/29/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a parent from an elementary school in Columbia argued that “the whole essence of Columbia living lies in its original plan to keep families together within the same neighborhoods. ... all of this goes out the door with the proposed school redistricting plan” (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting). But parents did not merely want their children to attend neighborhood schools; they wanted their children to attend schools in the neighborhood *of their choosing*—that is, the neighborhood in which they had purposefully chosen to live. This view was pronounced among parents from River Hill, Clarksville, and other western Howard County areas who were immigrants and/or had experienced financial hardship. Many of these parents believed that redistricting their children from a school they perceived was more prestigious, like River Hill, to a school they perceived was less prestigious, like Wilde Lake, violated their right to pursue the “American Dream.” One testimony from a parent who immigrated from China illustrated this perspective:

I was born in the ‘60s in a small village in China. Life was very hard back then. ... In the late ‘90s, I came to the United States with my wife ... with \$500 in our pockets. ... Even though we could only afford groceries that were on sale, used furniture that we picked up by the dumpsters ... we fell in love with the country because we could see a bright future

for our son. ... After almost 20 years of hard work, my wife and I finally owned a home in a safe and quiet community where our children can grow up and thrive. Just a few days ago, we suddenly felt our American dream is under attack. ... The superintendent's proposal will rip apart our community by busing our children to a school in a community that we knew nothing about. ... We used to think this type of government behavior could only happen in a county like China, where your life can be put upside down overnight because of a piece of government order. Never in my thought that someone would decide where my children have to go to school in America (9/2/19 Written Testimony).

Similarly, a River Hill parent who had immigrated to the U.S. from Asia argued that the superintendent's plan was a "punishment" for hard-working, immigrant families:

We are immigrants coming from east Asia. We worked all our lives to save enough money so that we could afford to send our kid to a good school. We chose our school carefully so that it is not only a good school but also close to us. ... Our dream was shuttered on 8/22 by the redistricting plan. ... I don't understand why hard-working families like us are punished for no good reason (9/1/19 Written Testimony).

Another River Hill parent also lamented that the superintendent's plan would ruin her "American Dream:"

My parents were immigrants to this country and worked very hard to see that I received an excellent education to be "better than them" in life. ... We [my sister and I] have worked very hard and made a lot of sacrifices to get out of the apartment complexes we were raised in to provide a better life for our children. I am not okay with the American Dream that I've worked so hard for to be taken away from me and my kids (9/4/19 Written Testimony).

Yet another River Hill parent, who had grown up receiving Free and Reduced Price Meals at school, described how the superintendent's plan would undermine the hard work she and her family put in to afford living in their desired community:

I grew up in a very economically-depressed area. In fact, I was a FARMs kid. ...

My mom told me that if I wanted to go to college, I had to find a way to pay for it myself because she couldn't afford it. So, I went to work. I studied hard and got straight A's. ...

As a result, I was awarded a full scholarship to college. I worked hard there, too, and got into law school. ... When my husband and I first started out practicing, we lived in a tiny 950 square-foot house in Elkridge. ... After years of working and saving, we decided we wanted to move to ... the River Hill community. We chose this for our family. We shop, eat, play sports and other activities, and worship with this community, for now. Our choice of community for our kids is being taken away by this plan. Quite the reward for all the hard work this FARMs kid did. (10/7/19 Board of Education meeting).

Overall, these parents believed that Superintendent Martirano's recommended redistricting plan was unfair because it would undermine the sacrifices they made to ensure that their children attended River Hill, which they perceived to be a high-quality school. These findings align with existing research that suggests many Asian American parents believe access to particular educational institutions, including universities and specialized high schools, should be based on merit. Generally, these parents' buy-in to meritocracy ignores how race has shaped the structure of U.S. society, and particularly how systemic racism has limited Black and Latinx students' access to elite schools (R. Liu et al., 2023; Poon et al., 2019).

Parents and students from across the county also opposed the superintendent's redistricting plan because they thought it would separate children from their social networks,

which could have devastating effects on their mental health. For example, one River Hill student who would have been redistricted to Wilde Lake wrote, “After being with my friends for over five years ... I will be sent to a different school in which I and many of my peers will feel like outsiders” (9/26/19 Board of Education meeting). Another community member argued that “uprooting children and changing schools ... disturbs life-long friendships they have built with their school-mates” (8/27/19 Written Testimony). One River Hill parent suggested that “separating the kids from their friends that were made over the years will impact them psychologically” (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Many parents and some students also submitted empirical studies with their written testimonies that linked community instability with mental health issues. For instance, a River Hill parent explained that a recent study her colleague conducted suggested how important it was for students to maintain strong relationships in high school:

One of my colleagues ... published an article last week on the increased risk of suicide among students who have fewer or less stable peer and adult networks in their high school. ... Maintaining stability ... in the high school years is a mental health matter, and a significant responsibility we must all assume in making decisions about moving students during this developmental stage. Students who have started in one high school should be allowed the opportunity to remain in that school for the duration of high school. (10/15/19 Board of Education meeting).

Similarly, a River Hill student described research on the academic and psychological side effects of changing social environments. Consequently, this student argued that redistricting would negatively affect their postsecondary prospects:

There are many extensive studies that have proved that students, like me, suffer academically due to the prolonged forced bus rides, sleep deprivation, forced separation from existing friends and supporting groups, when forced to adjust to a new school and new social environment. I am worried about this forced separation from my counselors and teachers at my current school, who have known me for years and who can provide guidance and write me recommendation letters. I will heavily suffer in my college application and very likely lose the opportunity to get into the college that I deserve.

(9/26/19 Board of Education meeting)

In sum, maintaining community stability was a common reason why many community members in Howard County—particularly parents and students from River Hill—described opposing the superintendent’s plan. But like the travel-related reasons many parents gave for opposing the superintendent’s recommendation, community-oriented reasons may have also served as a cover for racism and classism.

Failure to Address Overcrowding

Some community members argued that Superintendent Martirano’s redistricting plan would increase students’ travel times and disrupt communities *without* resolving the issue they felt was most pressing: overcrowding. Parents were particularly frustrated that the plan did not address overcrowding (at least in their view) given that overcrowding had prompted the school board to initiate redistricting. In the words of one River Hill parent, “The superintendent’s plan ... fails to address the overcrowding that prompted redistricting” (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting). Likewise, one Clarksville parent wrote, “The proposal unnecessarily adds travel distance and time for students without alleviating overcrowding at their schools” (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Many who argued that the superintendent's plan would not alleviate overcrowding were from western Howard County. In particular, these community members questioned why they should be redistricted out of River Hill schools—some of which were under capacity at the time. Parents and students argued that redistricting students from River Hill High School was inefficient, inconvenient, and did not address any school capacity issues. For instance, one River Hill parent explained:

It doesn't make sense to move 478 students out, then 741 students into a school [River Hill High School] at 94% capacity. This is extremely disruptive and unnecessary! This massive move will separate neighbors and friends, and destroy the continuity of our community. ... Wouldn't it be more efficient and economical to keep the current students in River Hill while receiving more students from nearby schools such as Wilde Lake? Wouldn't it make better sense to save the \$60,000 busing cost on music programs and other educational resources? (8/27/19 Written Testimony)

Likewise, another River Hill parent wrote:

The first goal of the redistricting is to balance capacity utilization, alleviate crowding. Our home school River Hill HS is under capacity, and the distance from our neighborhood to River Hill HS is 4.2 miles. Common sense would dictate no base to move our kids to any other school but to keep them in River Hill HS. ... Instead of simply proposing moving in more students to RHHS, the redistricting plan calls to move out 478 RHHS students, ... move in 741 students from other schools ... for the mere net increase of 263 students. Instead of affecting 263 students/families, this nonsensical plan is to disrupt the life of 1,219 students/families. ... This plan is not solving the problem of crowding or under-capacity, but creating more problems such as wasting precious

resources on busing, dramatically increasing commute time and stress on students and families (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Ostensibly, the superintendent proposed redistricting students between River Hill and Wilde Lake to diversify the schools racially/ethnically and socioeconomically, not to address capacity issues; River Hill was predominantly White, Asian, and wealthy, while Wilde Lake served much higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students. It appeared that these parents would accept minimal redistricting to balance school capacity utilization, but found redistricting for other purposes—like desegregation—to be unnecessary. In the words of one parent, “We should move students only to relieve overcrowding, not for a social experiment. Please don’t play politics with our kids” (9/3/19 Written Testimony). Indeed, evidence described later in this chapter demonstrates that parents from River Hill and other parts of the county did not think redistricting should be used to desegregate schools at all.

Failure to Incorporate Community Input

In addition to creating increased travel times and community instability while failing to address overcrowding, those who submitted written testimonies and spoke at public hearings argued that the superintendent’s proposed redistricting plan did not incorporate feedback from community members who responded to the Feasibility Study survey. They expressed these views largely because they perceived that the superintendent’s plan prioritized desegregating schools over reducing travel times and maintaining neighborhood schools—factors that many Feasibility Study survey respondents indicated were at the top of their lists. For example, one community member argued that it was “unjust” for Superintendent Michael Martirano to recommend a plan that was vastly different from those proposed in the Feasibility Study. Furthermore, this

community member suggested that Martirano was merely pursuing a redistricting plan that aligned with his own “agenda.”

It is very disheartening, discouraging, frustrating ... to read Dr. Martirano’s recommended attendance area adjustment plan. What makes Dr. Martirano’s proposal very volatile and unjust is how completely different and extreme it is than the recommendations presented in the Feasibility Study. What was the point of the Feasibility Study then? What was the purpose of asking Howard County residents to study and weigh in ... on the Feasibility Study if Dr. Martirano simply disregarded it! Perhaps the Feasibility Study did not meet Dr. Martirano’s personal or political agenda.
(8/27/19 Written Testimony)

A Pointers Run parent also argued that Martirano’s plan unfairly disregarded community feedback on the Feasibility Study options in order to pursue his own goals. This parent explained:

When redistricting was first announced, the goal was reducing critical overcrowding. Over the summer, community members participated in public meetings to discuss the proposals in the Feasibility Study. We were only allowed to comment on those suggestions. Yet, the superintendent’s plan shifted the playing field. The priorities the community had identified in those meetings were replaced with the sole goal of redistributing FARMs (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting).

Similarly, a Clarksville parent suggested that Martirano’s recommended plan disregarded the priorities of Feasibility Study survey respondents. In this parent’s words:

In our online survey summary results published in June, question five lists the three most important [factors] for consideration for boundary review processes and they are keeping

feeds [i.e., groups] of students together from one school to the next, maintaining contiguous communities, and transportation considerations. ... The superintendent's proposal not only did not address any of the feedback ... but on the contrary will make the three most important factors worse (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Overall, these community members believed that the superintendent's decision to prioritize desegregation in his redistricting plan meant that he had willfully ignored feedback from many who provided input on the Feasibility Study options.

Some River Hill parents also argued that Superintendent Martirano's plan failed to incorporate community input because the Attendance Area Committee (AAC), which provided feedback as he developed his recommendation, did not include anyone who represented them. For example, one parent suggested that River Hill's lack of voice on the AAC led to them being disproportionately affected by the superintendent's plan. In this parent's view, "RHHS was not represented on the AAC and is clearly targeted" (10/14/19 Board of Education meeting). Similarly, a Clarksville parent claimed that Asian American parents did not have adequate representation on the AAC. This parent explained:

As Asian Americans, we value diversity, equity, and inclusiveness. However, we found the AAC member representation lacks transparency and fairness. HCPSS has 22% Asian students, but there is no appropriate Asian American representation at the AAC. Is this fair? Are Asian Americans part of the diversity? (10/7/19 Board of Education meeting)

As described in the previous chapter, AAC members represented a wide range of community groups. Yet, documentary and interview data do not indicate whether or how many Asian American community members served on the committee. Thus, while, as described in the

previous chapter, the AAC included many racially/ethnically minoritized members, it is possible that it was not representative of the diverse group of Asian Americans in Howard County.

Using “Equity” to Resist an Equity-Oriented Redistricting Plan

Just as Superintendent Martirano framed his redistricting plan as “equity in action,” many community members used the term “equity” in attempt to legitimize their *resistance* to his plan. While the superintendent conceptualized equity as desegregation, community members conceptualized equity—and cited it as their impetus for opposition—in other ways. First, parents and students argued that there was no need to desegregate schools because they were already sufficiently diverse. For instance, one student from Mount Hebron High School, located in the northern part of the county, said at a public hearing:

I hear lots of people saying all this is happening because there are people who don’t think our schools are diverse. But [Mount] Hebron is. ... My soccer teammates are African American, Hispanic, Asian, Indian, Muslim, and we all work well together as a team. Everyone sits with different people at lunch and we all hang out after school (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting).

While this student’s social circle may have been diverse, relative to the district as a whole, Mount Hebron had disproportionately more Asian and White students and disproportionately fewer FRPM students; almost three-quarters of students were Asian or White, and just 12 percent received FRPM. Likewise, a River Hill parent exclaimed:

We see every color in our community and there are Black, Asian, Indian, Mexican, and White kids in my daughter’s class. So I am curious, what do you mean when you say our school/community is not diverse, and how can the current plan bring more diversity? (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting)

Despite this parent’s observation of racial/ethnic diversity in River Hill, River Hill schools—like Mount Hebron—tended to be overwhelmingly White and Asian and served few low-income students. Thus, to community members like this one, diversity appeared to include race and culture but to exclude socioeconomic status. Furthermore, these community members relied on narrow, anecdotal evidence about the diversity of HCPSS schools, rather than statistical evidence about school demographics.

In addition to arguing that schools were already diverse, some parents argued that schools were not actively or noticeably segregated. For example, one Clarksville parent claimed that desegregating schools through redistricting was both divisive and unnecessary because Howard County did not have *real* segregation, like that which existed in neighboring Washington, D.C. This parent explained:

Howard County is diverse and rich in cultures. That’s why we’re here. Do not make a problem out of nothing. If you want to see segregation, go to the northwest side of Washington, D.C. versus the southeast side. ... Let’s live together in harmony and stop dividing the county (9/25/19 Board of Education meeting).

Some interview participants shared the belief that Howard County was not segregated, and therefore did not need to be desegregated. For instance, one White parent from Columbia said:

I don’t see us [Howard County] as having segregated schools. I just don’t see it. Even in the western part of the county where things are less diverse, you still have diversity. I understand that that’s what their intention is, is to desegregate, but I don’t understand what they’re desegregating.

Generally, these community members believed their schools and communities were already diverse, and saw no need to enact a redistricting plan that would desegregate them.

Second, parents, students, and other community members argued that Superintendent Martirano’s plan would not advance equity as it claimed to do. Many argued that desegregation would not solve the true problem of resource disparities between low- and higher-income schools—even though the superintendent proposed desegregating schools as a strategy to more evenly distribute educational resources. For example, one community member wrote, “The proposal does not provide additional resources directly to students in need, it simply provides more consistent FARM ratios across schools. Children do not need consistent FARM ratios, they need additional education resources provided directly to their schools” (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a River Hill parent argued that desegregation would not resolve socioeconomic disparities in HCPSS, and further claimed that education was not the “right place” to address those disparities. In this parent’s words:

Busing kids over longer distances is not the right solution to bring equity. It only makes the number appear better. ... Education is not politics and this is not the right place to deal with economic issues. Instead of putting more money into transportation based on the current plan, please make better use of the money and make some real impact on supporting the families in need (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting).

Some students made similar arguments. For instance, a sophomore at River Hill High School wrote:

It seems as if the redistricting plan will only shift children in need of FARMs around rather than addressing the issue of providing more resources to the students who need them. The plan will only make the ratios better in each school, but on a county level, nothing will have changed. ... Rather than redistributing the students who need more financial support, the Board of Education could allocate more funding towards the

schools who need it more (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Similarly, an eighth grader who attended a predominantly White school with an FRPM rate of less than two percent said at a hearing, “I support your fight for equity, however, shuffling up students like a deck of cards is not the answer” (9/26/19 Board of Education meeting). Other community members who argued that desegregation “isn’t tackling the problem” (8/27/19 Written Testimony) made clear that they, like the superintendent, valued equity; they just did not believe redistricting was the best way to advance it. For instance, one parent wrote:

Equity is a noble goal that I support wholeheartedly. However, in the context of education, equity should really be about ensuring that every child has access to the resources they *need* to achieve their highest potential. It’s not about FARM rates (9/10/19 Written Testimony).

Another community member explained:

A thousand percent I believe that this entire community believes all children should be provided a quality education but the truth is, this redistricting amounts to no more than shuffling kids to improve our statistics. In no way does it actually address the heart of the problem, which is that Howard County has a poverty issue. ... Redistricting is not going to fix this (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Similarly, a River Hill parent said, simply, “We are for equity, but do not think addressing FARM distribution is the way to go” (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Some community members also argued that the superintendent’s redistricting plan would negatively affect FRPM students, despite its intention. Those who made this argument did not identify themselves as low-income parents or students; rather, they appeared to be parents from wealthy parts of the county, like River Hill, who did not want to be redistricted. For example,

one community member who grew up in a low-income household argued that redistricting would create undue stress on low-income families, and believed that, instead of redistricting, HCPSS should allocate more funds to low-income students. Another community member argued that redistricting low-income students to schools that were farther from their homes would cause their families stress and limit their ability to participate in after-school activities:

The [superintendent's] proposal suggests imposing these additional costs on FARM students who are an extremely cost sensitive segment of our community. I do not believe the proposal ... properly addresses the significant financial burdens placed on these FARM students and their families by shifting them around the community into further away schools. Parents who already cannot make ends meet and who struggle with multiple jobs do not need the added burden of a 25+ minute commute to attend their child's sporting event or band performance in a strange part of town. The commute ... is certainly impactful to the student's ability to complete school work and engage in positive activities outside the school day. (8/27/19 Written Testimony)

Some interview participants also suggested that redistricting would not benefit low-income students. For instance, one White parent from western Howard County explained:

The fact is that if they [families] are part of the free and reduced meal programs they don't necessarily have the transportation to get to a bused community if they're within walking distance [at their current school]. They don't want to be moved around necessarily.

But while this was a *popular* sentiment among some interview participants and community members who submitted written testimonies and spoke at public hearings, it is unclear how *accurate* these claims were. As noted, many community members who argued that redistricting

would not benefit low-income students did not identify as low-income. To be sure, low-income families may have perceived redistricting to be an added stress. However, no interview participants indicated that their children received FRPM, and it is unclear whether low-income families' perspectives were represented in documentary data. Thus, it is also possible—and perhaps more likely—that community members who opposed the superintendent's plan for this reason did so because they thought it would legitimize their resistance. These community members may have feared that opposing a redistricting plan that aimed to desegregate schools would appear racist and classist, and in a community that espoused equity-oriented values, arguments that appeared racist and classist could be less likely to influence board members' decisions. By claiming that they opposed the superintendent's plan *for* low-income families, rather than for their own benefit, these community members may have thought their arguments would be more likely to sway board members to enact a redistricting plan other than the superintendent's recommendation, or to abandon redistricting altogether.

Third, community members argued that the superintendent's redistricting plan would create *inequities*, rather than advancing equity. One River Hill parent argued that, "While equity might not be advanced [by the superintendent's plan] as intended, the plan will certainly have many adverse effects" (10/7 Board of Education meeting). The "adverse effects" that this parent and others referred to included increased travel times and loss of community. For example, one parent from western Howard County believed the superintendent's plan was "not equitable" simply because it would move students from their current schools: "We are deeply concerned with the proposed redistricting proposal to send our children from our neighborhood school. ... The current proposed plan is not equitable. It punishes the children who are moving out from their current schools" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a Clarksville parent argued that

the plan was unfair because it would reduce Clarksville families' property values and "burden" them with addressing the issues stemming from segregation. This parent explained:

If the proposed plan is implemented, it is always almost certain that the property values in the Clarksville Middle School area, where we bought our current house a few years ago at a premium price, are going to decrease drastically. ... This proposed plan essentially would put all the burden of trying to correct a perceived less desirable situation—namely, that students in schools with a high FARM rate have a relatively lower performance rating—onto families like us, while it is *not* our fault that those students are underperforming academically. ... All of us parents here are for desegregation, especially because we are ourselves minorities. However, ... addressing this issue should start from root causes ... and not forcing kids to be bused from one school to another, which in turn put all the burden on family like ours (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

Some parents also perceived that the superintendent's plan would create inequities by taking educational opportunities *away* from some students. As one River Hill parent argued, "To manipulate the FARM ratios by ... averaging them out is not a true solution. And to reach this goal by sacrificing the opportunities in education for other students is unethical!" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Similarly, a Clarksville parent argued that the superintendent's plan would "inequitably reassign Clarksville Middle School students" because it would send them to Harpers Choice Middle School, which had lower test scores. These two schools were also drastically different demographically: Clarksville Middle was roughly 85% Asian and White and had a 2% FRPM rate, while Harpers Choice was predominantly Black and Hispanic and had a 42% FRPM rate. In this parent's words:

The test score differential after moving Clarksville students and Harpers Choice students

shows substantially greater disparity than with any other school reassignment. ... Such score differentials will make such transition harmful to both Harpers Choice and Clarksville students. ... Moving a child for the purpose of increasing test scores is unethical (8/27/19 Written Testimony).

In sum, parents and other community members opposed the superintendent's plan because they thought it would both fail to advance equity for low-income students and create additional inequities for all students.

Finally, community members tried to convince school board members not to enact Superintendent Martirano's plan by proposing what they believed were better ways to advance equity in HCPSS. The vast majority suggested *voluntary* approaches, meaning that they would not require investment of time, effort, or resources from wealthier families in the district. Parents proposed school choice options like open enrollment, magnet schools, and special programs that would allow students to transfer to higher-performing schools, as well as extracurricular programs that they thought would be academically enriching for low-income students. For example, one River Hill parent suggested to the school board, "Why not offer vouchers to ... attend other public or private schools?" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a Clarksville parent said, simply, "Instead of redistricting, utilize choice-based plans" (10/7/19 Board of Education meeting). Another River Hill parent argued that the school board "should try to find real solutions ... to help these students. For example, creating free after-school programs for students who use the FARM program, setting up funds for these students to use for certain academic enrichment programs" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). The fact that parents—especially those from the wealthier western part of the county—advocated for voluntary desegregation plans as opposed to regulatory plans like redistricting is unsurprising: a multitude of studies has

documented that parents who oppose redistricting and other reassignment policies that aim to diversify schools often do so by advocating for choice-based policies (e.g., Baum, 2010; Diem, 2017; Serbulo, 2019).

Race-Neutral or Racist?

While many community members—especially those from River Hill—resisted Superintendent Martirano’s redistricting plan for ostensibly race-neutral reasons, many who supported desegregation suggested that these arguments merely distracted from the racism and classism that undergirded them. Many interview participants noted that opposition to redistricting came mostly from White or Asian parents in wealthier communities who would have been redistricted to schools with higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students. Several participants recalled how this was the case for River Hill families whom the superintendent’s plan redistricted to Wilde Lake. A few participants thought these families’ claims were ridiculous and simply used as covers for racism and classism. For example, one Asian parent from Elkridge recalled the many ways that River Hill families tried to cover up what she perceived to be racist reasons for not wanting their children to attend Wilde Lake:

I remember one particular testimony where it’s a two-physician household, and they’re complaining that their nanny’s going to have to drive 10 minutes to get the kids or something because they’ll be at Wilde Lake instead of River Hill. I’m like, “What?”

Likewise, a Black parent indicated that, while he sympathized with parents who did not want their children to lose the relationships they had at their current schools and did not want increased travel times, he thought their resistance was really about race and class. His perspective was heavily shaped by his own experience being bused to a predominantly White school as a child. He explained:

I can at least understand when people are talking about moving from where they've had relationships and the friends and socialization and so forth. ... I understand where they're coming from. I don't necessarily know if I always agree, and part of it is ... I went to school 30 miles across town, starting in 7th grade. I caught the bus at 6:30 in the morning as a 7th grader to go across town from where I was going from being at a school that was majority Black to being at a school that was majority White. ... For me, sometimes when I hear about people in Howard County saying, "Oh, but this is so far." I'm like, ... "What do you mean it's so far?" ... I did have a hard time relating. ... I think at the end of the day, it might have been talked about the distance, but it really just, unfortunately, came down to, I think, a lot of instances of race and class.

Overall, these parents thought that resistance to the superintendent's plan on the basis of inconveniences like increased travel time were simply covers to some families' desires not to send their children to more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse schools.

Interview participants also questioned parents' claims that redistricting would not resolve resource inequities. For example, some recalled how parents from River Hill argued that, instead of redistricting, HCPSS should simply provide more funding to low-income schools. One Asian parent from Elkrige referred to this argument as "nonsense," explaining, "The whole belief that integration doesn't raise all boats or that we don't even care about raising all boats, it was horrifying." A White parent from Oakland Mills also addressed this argument, which she referred to as "Improve Don't Move"—a phrase that many opponents of the superintendent's plan used to protest it. This parent believed that the "Improve Don't Move" argument was both a strategy to avoid desegregation and a hollow promise—one that made redistricting HCPSS's best shot at improving equity. She explained:

This “Improve Don’t Move” [argument], the improve part never comes. It’s never come. They [people who resisted the superintendent’s plan] have never testified for any support. . . . People are always pissed about any equity program that some schools get that they don’t get, so the improve part has never happened. It’s never gonna happen. So this [redistricting] is what we’re stuck with. This is the only tool that we have.

This parent also recalled how some western Howard County residents claimed that they opposed the superintendent’s plan because it was the county council’s job—not the school district’s—to ensure that communities were integrated by providing mixed-income housing options. She perceived this argument to be a farce, too, because families in western Howard County often resisted when the council proposed building affordable housing there. In her words:

There were a lot of people who used development to say, “Look, we didn’t intentionally segregate schools. It’s the developers. They didn’t put affordable housing in western Howard County, so it’s not our fault. If there was affordable housing there, we’d be fine with it. We just don’t want to have a longer bus ride.” Which is total bullshit, because they’ve fought every time. Everyone in Howard County fights affordable housing.

In sum, these parents thought claims that HCPSS and the county council should address resource inequities and segregation through strategies other than redistricting were simply excuses to delay desegregating schools and providing students with equal educational opportunities.

In addition to perceiving seemingly race-neutral arguments as racist, some interview participants recalled hearing opposition to the superintendent’s plan that was overtly racist or classist. For instance, one Black parent from southeastern Howard County said that responses to the superintendent’s plan were “very mean and nasty. They [opponents of the plan] were saying very derogatory things about people’s neighborhoods and people’s kids. They didn’t want their

kids to go to school with those kids. ... It was just really ugly.” Several participants suggested that opposition from River Hill parents who did not want their children to be redistricted to Wilde Lake was particularly “ugly.” For example, one Asian parent from Elkridge recalled “the ugliness that was thrown at the Wilde Lake community by the River Hill community.” Likewise, a White parent from Oakland Mills described how the racism spewed at Wilde Lake students and families made them hesitant to send their children to school with students from River Hill. She explained:

The stuff they [River Hill families] said about Wilde Lake was the worst. I mean, like called their kids ghetto, just all kinds of stuff, and the kids are watching all of this. ... At that point, everyone who was advocating for a more equitable distribution felt like ... they didn’t want those kids coming from River Hill. Like, how are those kids going to treat their kids? ... They were so nasty that it had everybody being like, “I don’t know about this. Is this just how it’s going to be? Is this how they’re going to treat our kids? Are we going to send our kids off here?”

An AAC member said that he heard similar concerns from families of Color and low-income families, who were unsure about sending their children to a school where parents and students were so vehemently opposing the superintendent’s plan:

AAC member: I had dozens of people tell me that they were afraid for their children. While they thought what we [the AAC and the superintendent] were trying to do was good, they wouldn’t want to send their children to a school where they weren’t wanted. That created a real fear from parents who, while we were going through this process, were afraid that their children would be bused to one of these schools where these families are standing up every week and showing the ugliest side of community.

Interviewer: Were the families who were concerned about that ... lower-income families, families of Color, a diverse group of families?

AAC member: Typically, free and reduced meal families and typically families of color, either Black and/or Hispanic.

Another White parent from the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill remembered how some of her neighbors made racist and classist statements when talking about Swansfield Elementary School, the predominantly Black, Hispanic, and low-income school to which the superintendent's plan proposed redistricting them. She even described how her son, who was in elementary school at the time, questioned why many of his neighbors did not want their children to attend Swansfield. The comments this parent heard from her neighbors eventually led her to allow him to be redistricted to Swansfield, rather than sending him to private school. This parent explained:

There were plenty of times that the people in my neighborhood [Pointers Run], the things that like they would say would make me feel disgusted and upset. I think that's what pushed us in the direction of sending him there [Swansfield]. Who do they think they are and do they think that they're better? Just like my son said, actually, "Do they think that they're better than these other people? What were they afraid of?" That ignorance ... Did some of it sound racist? Yes. Did some of it sound elitist? Yes.

The overtly racist and classist opposition to redistricting that these parents heard is not new; studies of school desegregation efforts have long documented how racism has motivated White parents, in particular, to oppose certain desegregation plans. However, it is somewhat surprising in a community that espouses values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and civility. Furthermore, several interview participants indicated that racist and classist opposition did not just come from

White parents—in fact, it came mostly from Asian parents. One parent who identified as Black and White explained how she was both surprised and disappointed that many Asian parents opposed a plan that aimed to desegregate schools. In her words, “The dynamic [of redistricting] ... it wasn’t just White versus Black. ... The most people I had disappointment with was the Asian community. I guess people assumed they would be open to things being equitable, but they were not.” One White parent who supported desegregation thought that so many Asian families opposed redistricting for desegregation was because many of them had recently immigrated to the U.S. and did not understand the history of anti-Blackness and oppression in our country. Furthermore, she recalled how some Chinese immigrants who opposed the superintendent’s plan equated desegregation with communism. She explained:

The large South Asian population [who opposed the superintendent’s plan], they had a really hard time understanding systematic racism and privilege and the historical context of our country, and how Black people were treated for 500 years. So, in their minds that [systemic racism] doesn’t happen. ... You know, a lot of the Chinese immigrants were like, “this is communism.” I was called the Red Guard. ... I mean, they were so nasty. ... There’s historical context missing.

Indeed, some community members described in written testimony and at public hearings that the superintendent’s plan reminded them of their experiences with communism in China. As one parent explained:

Never in my wildest dreams did I foresee that I would fight the communist ideology in two different countries. ... In China, people couldn’t think freely, couldn’t speak freely, and properties could be taken anytime by the government. ... In Howard County, our hardworking fruits and our children’s future will get robbed by the government. But let

me tell you as one who has experienced in, communism doesn't work (8/29/19 Written Testimony).

References to communism and governmental overreach were particularly prevalent in community members' responses to the Howard County Council's resolution that called on HCPSS to desegregate schools, described later in this chapter.

Altogether, the overwhelming response to Superintendent Michael Martirano's proposed redistricting plan was opposition. Parents, students, and other community members—especially White and Asian community members from the western part of the county—argued that the superintendent's plan would unfairly increase travel times and disrupt communities, and claimed that providing additional funding to low-income schools would more effectively address inequities than redistricting. Most of these reasons appeared race-neutral, but appeared to be grounded in racist and classist beliefs about Black, Hispanic, and low-income students and the schools that served them.

Support for the Superintendent's Plan

As with the Feasibility Study options, relatively few community members supported the superintendent's plan, and those who did supported it because they thought HCPSS should use redistricting as an opportunity to desegregate schools. Advocates of the plan used similar strategies to influence school board members, but on a much smaller scale than their opponents. For example, several supporters donned shirts at public hearings for redistricting and CR-112—the county council's resolution that called on HCPSS to use redistricting to desegregate schools—that read “#DefendThePlan” (9/17/19 County Council meeting). Advocates also held signs in support of the superintendent's plan outside school board headquarters, and some even joined a smaller Facebook group, which one interview participant suggested had about 60

members. But, like opponents of the superintendent's plan, the most frequent influence strategy for advocates was submitting testimony to the school board and attending public hearings.

Those who supported Superintendent Martirano's plan believed that, in the words of one Wilde Lake Parent-Teacher-Student Association member, "Dr. Martirano's plan moves the needle in the right direction" (9/24/19 Written Testimony). Many of these advocates were from schools and areas of the community with higher populations of Black and low-income residents. They supported the superintendent's plan because they recognized that the county's schools were segregated and thought redistricting could help to address that issue. For example, one parent from Fulton—a predominantly White and Asian wealthy community south of Columbia—expressed support for redistricting part of the wealthy Maple Lawn neighborhood to Laurel Woods Elementary School, where almost 50% of students were Black, almost a third were Hispanic, and more than half received FRPM. She explained:

I am in full support of changing school boundaries to promote racial and socioeconomic integration in the county, including redistricting part of the Maple Lawn subdivision to Laurel Woods Elementary. I think the board of education should modify more school boundaries to ensure that no individual school has a FARMs rate that exceeds twice the HCPSS average, as it's unfair to schools and students to concentrate poverty and need among a subset of campuses. Each school should share the burden and blessing of delivering instruction to a diverse student body so that everyone has the opportunity to succeed (9/3/19 Board of Education meeting).

Likewise, a parent from Swansfield Elementary School appreciated that the superintendent's plan would reduce the school's poverty rate. This parent believed that desegregating schools by socioeconomic status would reduce the workload for teachers, improve the educational

environment, and, eventually, recruit more experienced teachers to Swansfield. In this parent's words:

When I read Dr. Martirano's proposal, I noticed that the boundary adjustments had a significant impact on reducing the concentration of poverty at HCPSS's most disadvantaged schools, including Swansfield. I saw this as a good thing, because schools like Swansfield would retain their valued diversity, but they would experience less strain on staff and resources. It would increase our teachers' effectiveness and better balance the disparities in the learning environments between our most and least disadvantaged schools, leading to a more equitable school experience for all students. Over time, it would help Swansfield attract the experienced teachers that are best equipped to help our most vulnerable students. These factors, along with additional social and educational supports and interventions, would perhaps begin to close the achievement gap. (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting)

Another parent, from Elkridge, suggested that desegregation was necessary to address educational inequities and feasible in a "trailblazing" place like Howard County:

We need to follow Dr. Martirano's plan. Opportunity is not pie. It is not finite. That actually is part of the beauty of America. It's about giving chances to everyone, especially the youngest among us, our children. We can lift all children by providing a more balanced socioeconomic environment. ... This is Howard County, a trailblazing place in many ways. ... After all, if not here, where? If not now, when? (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting).

Some students also supported redistricting for desegregation. For example, a student from Wilde Lake suggested that the school board had a responsibility to desegregate schools and ensure that

all HCPSS students had access to equitable educational opportunities—particularly as one of the wealthiest counties in the U.S. This student explained:

I fully support redistricting Howard County schools with desegregation, integration, and equity in mind, and I therefore fully support Dr. Martirano’s plan. This board has a once in a lifetime opportunity to continue the efforts started by leaders in the ‘50s to desegregate our schools. I strongly encourage this board to vote in favor for Dr. Martirano’s plan because every student, no matter of race or class, has the right to a full and equitable education, and that simply isn’t happening right now. We are segregating our students into race and class and giving schools with lower socioeconomic status less resources. This county has the duty as the third most wealthy county in the nation ... to not just support every student but to lead in the quest for diversity, equity, and inclusion (9/24/19 Board of Education meeting).

Even Maryland State Delegate Terri Hill, a Black woman, testified at a school board hearing to advocate for a redistricting plan that would desegregate schools, because, in her words, part of the county had become “ghettoized” (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting). Altogether, these policy actors supported Superintendent Martirano’s plan because they believed it would reduce growing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in the district.

Some parents who supported the superintendent’s plan suggested that it was the first to prioritize—or even consider—desegregation as an important purpose of redistricting. For example, one Oakland Mills parent explained how redistricting plans, including those proposed in the Feasibility Study, generally left Oakland Mills schools further *segregated*, rather than attempting to desegregate them:

The plan the superintendent has proposed is the first I've seen during my eight years as a parent in the school system and 17 years as a Howard County resident that seriously considers this part of Policy 6010 [school diversity]. Every plan implemented in the time I have lived here has pushed schools in my area to outlier status when looking at the socioeconomic distribution of the student body. Options in the last two feasibility studies would have made the situation even worse. (9/1/19 Board of Education meeting)

Another Oakland Mills parent argued that “the superintendent’s proposed plan is the only one worth considering” because “it is the only one that treats ... Oakland Mills schools with a more reasonable and encouraging level of fairness and equity” (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting). On the other hand, some community members felt that redistricting should do even more than the superintendent’s plan did to desegregate schools; still, they supported the plan because they seemed to view it as the best among alternatives. For example, one Oakland Mills parent explained:

I am testifying in favor of the superintendent’s proposals for redirecting. Frankly, I really don’t think they go far enough. The changes they make in many of the schools don’t really shift the balance of socioeconomic data enough to make a huge difference. ... I see his proposal as a start and a move in the right direction and that is why I favor it (9/17/19 Board of Education meeting).

One interview participant who identified as Black and White suggested that many Black residents of Howard County felt the same way about the superintendent’s plan. In this parent’s words, “There were quite a few groups [of Black community members in Howard County] that they just came out in support of the superintendent’s plan. They supported the plan even though they felt that it didn’t go far enough.” Ultimately, while some community members may have

wanted a redistricting plan that did more to desegregate schools, they supported Superintendent Martirano's plan because they thought it would move them closer to that goal.

Community Members' Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Howard County community members drew political power from various sources. First, they garnered power from the formal public input structures set by the school board. The board's policies allowed community members to submit written testimony regarding redistricting and to speak at the three aforementioned public hearings, which were divided into different regions of the county. At the beginning of each hearing, the chair of the board, Mavis Ellis, read a statement indicating that board members would read *all* written testimony that community members submitted and would weigh written testimony and attendance at public hearings equally, rather than giving more weight to testimonies of those who had the ability to attend hearings. While it appeared that the school board tried to make public input on redistricting an equal opportunity endeavor, many interview participants thought it was inequitable for a variety of reasons. For example, one Black parent explained that the board typically prioritized input from community members who attended public hearings over those who submitted written feedback. In her words:

When it all comes down to it, whether it's a county council or a school board meeting, they do put a lot of weight in who shows up. If we can't get people to show up because they just can't make it there, then it [what we think about an issue] doesn't matter much.

This parent, along with other interview participants, noted that prioritizing the views of those who could attend hearings was inequitable, given the time and schedule flexibility required to attend them. One Asian parent who supported the superintendent's plan described how the timing of redistricting hearings was both inconvenient and unpredictable, which made it hard for

families from some areas of the county—notably, Wilde Lake—to participate and gave outsized voice to other communities, like River Hill:

The whole thing was so ridiculous. ... The timings of the meetings, how long you had to be there, it was ridiculous. ... There are so many Wilde Lake families who couldn't participate in the testimony last time. It ended up with the screamers from River Hill. ... You never knew what time you were going to testify. You had to be able to be there at 4:00pm and stay until God knows what time to be able to testify because so many people were testifying.

Likewise, a Black parent suggested that low-income families had less ability than wealthier families to attend those hearings. She also perceived that the board ended up making decisions based on the “loudest” community members:

Look at the time of the meetings. They have meetings in the middle of the day. Who is going to be able to do this other than somebody with a decent income? ... They [the board members] are doing a lot of stuff based on emotions, push-back, who wants to get voted for, whatever. Whoever makes the loudest noise.

Many interview participants believed that the school board granted River Hill families more power to influence the redistricting process by extending the number of public hearings for their region, and failing to add more hearings for other regions. For example, one elected official said, “River Hill got a lot [of] nights [to testify], whereas other schools only got one. ... I think that really outsizes a voice. You're making decisions by decibel and not by data, and that is inherently problematic.” An Oakland Mills parent agreed:

When you start with a certain [redistricting] plan, and certain parts of the county are very, um, let's just say upset with that plan, and they come out in huge numbers, and

then you start changing things, but you don't go back and say, "Okay, we're going to invite everyone back in again," it starts to become inequitable.

Overall, these parents thought that, while the school board offered structured input opportunities for the community, those formal pathways for feedback ended up prioritizing the interests of wealthier families—including those from River Hill—more than lower-income families.

In addition to having the power and flexibility to attend public hearings, opponents of the superintendent's plan had the upper hand in numbers and resources. This group showed up in force at public hearings while also flooding board members with thousands of pages of written testimony—some of which included petitions with hundreds of signatures. This group of community members also had the capacity to build a coalition, FEI, which organized protests and other events that gave opponents of the superintendent's plan more visibility than advocates. The fact that most opponents of redistricting were from wealthy areas of the county also meant that they had more financial resources than advocates, who were mostly from mixed- and lower-income areas of the county. Opponents' financial advantages became evident in the implementation phase of redistricting, described in the next chapter.

Finally, opponents argued that they possessed the power to *sue* the district, the power to *vote out* school board members, and the power to *leave* HCPSS schools if the school board enacted the superintendent's redistricting plan. They threatened to use these sources of power, but did not employ them, in the enactment phase. For example, several community members from River Hill and Clarksville submitted written testimony threatening to sue the district, such as the Clarksville parent who said they would "pursue a lawsuit to prevent this nonsense redistribution proposal" (8/27/19 Written Testimony). Another parent claimed, "I will *not* vote to elect *any* of the incumbents should this poorly conceived plan be carried out" (10/30/19 Written

Testimony. Still, others threatened to “sell our house and move out of the area” (8/28/19 Written Testimony) or “enroll both of my children in Catholic school” (9/2/19 Written Testimony) if the superintendent’s plan went through.

Little evidence suggested that advocates of the superintendent’s plan were either skillful or unskillful in their deployment of power resources, likely because so many fewer policy actors advocated for the plan than opposed it. However, opponents of the superintendent’s proposal demonstrated political skill in their ability to mobilize community members and the rhetoric they used to resist the plan. While it may have been easier for this group of actors to mobilize people with similar policy goals than advocates, given the number of community members who opposed the plan, opponents exercised skill in getting parents, students, and others to write to board members, speak at board meetings, and attend protests. Furthermore, although swaths of community members from across the county opposed the plan for a variety of reasons, opponents’ reasons for resisting the plan were somewhat unified. For example, testimony after testimony argued that the superintendent’s plan would increase students’ travel times to school, break apart communities, and exacerbate inequities in HCPSS rather than address them. The coherence of these arguments made it more likely that the board would consider them when enacting a redistricting plan.

In addition to promoting a coherent stance on the superintendent’s plan, opponents also skillfully used the district’s most prominent value—equity—to legitimize their opposition in the eyes of board members, many of whom had expressed a commitment to equity in their campaigns. Opponents turned the superintendent’s “equity in action” redistricting plan on its head by trying to argue that *they* were the ones who were committed to equity, rather than (or at least, in addition to) the superintendent. Whether or not they were truly committed to equity,

their rhetoric had more potential to sway board members because it aligned with their espoused values, as well as the district’s Strategic Call to Action, “Learning and Leading with Equity.”

The sheer number of community members who submitted written testimony and spoke at or attended public hearings suggests that many of them had the political will to influence the redistricting process. Thousands of community members submitted testimony and attended public input sessions during the initiation phase, and turnout appeared to be significantly greater in the enactment phase. Community members on both sides of the superintendent’s plan submitted testimony and attended public hearings, but opponents also submitted countless petitions with hundreds of signatures, and attended protests in force. Opponents from River Hill and other western parts of the county even pressured the school board to add several more nights of public hearings.

County Council Resolution 112

At the same time community members were submitting feedback, Howard County councilmembers Christiana Rigby, Opel Jones, and Deb Jung were introducing, amending, hearing testimony about, and ultimately passing County Council Resolution 112 (CR-112), which called on HCPSS and the school board to use redistricting as an opportunity to desegregate schools. The councilmembers officially introduced the resolution on September 3rd, 2019; they formally described the resolution as “requesting the Howard County Public School System to draft, approve, and implement a lawful multi-year Integration Plan to ensure that Howard County Public Schools are integrated by socioeconomic factors” (9/3/19 council agenda). The resolution began by acknowledging the history of slavery and racial/ethnic segregation in the U.S. and Howard County, as well as the opportunity and achievement gaps that stem from it. It also cited dramatic disparities in HCPSS schools’ FRPM rates and disparities

in achievement and graduation rates between students who receive and do not receive FRPM and between Black and White students and Hispanic and White students. The resolution closed by quoting the district’s stated commitment to addressing inequities, detailed in its Strategic Call to Action, and citing evidence about the benefits of racially/ethnically and socioeconomically integrated classrooms.

At the first public hearing for CR-112, councilmembers Rigby, Jones, and Jung—all of whom represented parts of Columbia—made statements about why they supported the resolution. Rigby, a White woman, said she had proposed the resolution after “long conversations” with fellow councilmembers and community members about growing segregation and concentrations of poverty in the district. She further explained that her desire to introduce CR-112 stemmed from the redistricting options presented in the Feasibility Study, which “confirmed” that there were “concentrations of poverty in the district that need to be addressed” (9/18/19 County Council meeting). Jones, a Black man, shared that he supported the superintendent and school board members in their efforts to redistrict with “certain factors” in mind (9/18/19 County Council meeting). But Jones, a parent of HCPSS students, also made clear that he believed *all* HCPSS schools—regardless of their FRPM rates—were high-quality. In his words, “Five plus three equals eight no matter what school you go to. ... No matter where my kids go in Howard County Public Schools, they will go to one of the best damn schools in the state of Maryland” (9/18/19 County Council meeting). Jung, a White woman, said that her intention for co-introducing CR-112 was to “encourage a conversation with the school system about considering socioeconomic factors in the redistricting process,” given concentrations of poverty in the county (9/18/19 County Council meeting). Notably, all three councilmembers made it clear in their statements that they had “no authority over redistricting” (9/18/19 County

Council meeting). Rigby also mentioned that they had drafted the resolution prior to the superintendent's presentation of his recommended redistricting plan and did not "endorse" specific plans (9/18/19 County Council meeting); this statement appeared to acknowledge the timing of the councilmembers' press release about CR-112, which was published just a week before the superintendent presented his plan and caught both the superintendent and board members by surprise.

The council passed CR-112 on October 7th, 2019, when the school board was in the heat of public hearings about redistricting. After several amendments, including one that called on the council's support to examine "demographic and socioeconomic conditions within Howard County's Housing Policy and Regulations" (10/7/19 County Council meeting minutes). In essence, this amendment required the council to take some responsibility for the concentrations of poverty in the county that they were calling on HCPSS to address through redistricting. Ultimately, all but councilman David Yungmann, the lone Republican on the council from western Howard County, voted in favor of CR-112 as amended.

Community Responses to CR-112

Most community members who submitted written testimony about CR-112 and spoke about it at public hearings vehemently opposed the resolution. Many also linked their opposition to CR-112 with their opposition to Superintendent Martirano's recommended redistricting plan; most of the written testimony submitted to the council opposed the superintendent's plan, even though the council had no authority over the superintendent or which plan the school board would eventually enact. Like at the school board's hearings for redistricting, most speakers were White or Asian, and most opposed CR-112 and using redistricting as a strategy to desegregate

schools. Many audience members wore the same shirts they wore to school board hearings, which indicated their resistance to redistricting and solidarity with their neighbors.

Community members opposed CR-112 for a variety of reasons. Many who submitted testimony or spoke at hearings were perturbed by councilmembers' decisions to include words like "segregation" and "racism" in the resolution, which they perceived to be inaccurate and divisive. For example, one Ellicott City resident argued that the language in the resolution was "incendiary" and intended to make him, a White man, feel ashamed. In his words:

I find the language in this resolution divisive and frankly insulting to me as a Howard County resident. Howard County schools are in fact the least segregated in Maryland. We are a national model for diversity and inclusion. I moved here with my biracial family specifically for this reason. ... When I see mentions of slavery and other racially charged statements, I am made to feel that somehow this is directed at me and that I should feel some sort of shame (9/18/19 County Council meeting).

Many other community members who submitted testimony or spoke at hearings also argued that CR-112 was inaccurate and divisive because segregation did not exist in HCPSS schools. For example, one Clarksville resident wrote: "Howard County is not segregated, and Howard County is diverse. The language and pretext of this resolution is simply false" (9/1/19 County Council meeting). Likewise, a resident of the Kings Contrivance neighborhood of Columbia claimed:

I have lived here for 16 years and I have never seen or felt segregation, either intentional or otherwise. I live in a very racially mixed neighborhood and our neighborhood is surrounded by apartment complexes, townhouses, and single-family homes. I live in Columbia *for* the diversity of lived experiences. ... I like it this way. When you tell me Howard County has a need to be integrated, I look around and wonder where the

integration needs to happen. In my neighborhood, in my daughter’s school, in my experience living in Columbia and Howard County in general, I see nothing but integration. (9/18/19 County Council meeting)

Those who argued that Howard County was not segregated, and therefore did not need to be *desegregated*, appeared to conflate diversity with desegregation. Howard County *is* racially/ethnically diverse overall, but these community members seemed to overlook the fact that many neighborhoods—especially in the western part of the county—were not representative of the racial/ethnic or socioeconomic diversity of the county as a whole. One White interview participant from Oakland Mills captured this sentiment when explaining why she thought so many people, especially residents of River Hill who were immigrants, opposed CR-112:

I think that by that time [CR-112 was introduced], people were already like, “Oh my God, they’re gonna send our kids to that school.” And then for that [CR-112] to come out, they [opponents of CR-112 and the superintendent’s plan] were like, “Gasp! What? Now the council’s supporting? Like, what?” I think they just saw the realization that it [the superintendent’s redistricting plan] was going to be harder to fight, especially when they [councilmembers] are saying that our schools are segregated. They [opponents] did not like that because they thought that, you know, their schools aren’t segregated:

“There’s not all White people at River Hill. We’re diverse. We have a lot of diversity.” Yeah, you have Asian people and White people. That’s pretty much it. But they were very offended. The immigrants felt offended about people talking about the lack of diversity at their schools.

Additionally, community members who argued that there was no segregation in the county often referred to racial/ethnic segregation, rather than socioeconomic segregation, which both CR-112

and the superintendent's plan were trying to address. And as the previous participant pointed out, "you can't separate the two [race and socioeconomic] in Howard County. It [socioeconomic status] *is* race." Nationally, Black and Hispanic families tend to have lower than average median household incomes, while Asian and White families tend to have higher than average median household incomes (Peter G. Peterson Foundation, 2022). This trend appears to hold in Howard County, too: HCPSS schools with higher FRPM percentages also had higher percentages of Black and Hispanic students.

Another subset of community members acknowledged the existence of segregation in Howard County, but opposed CR-112 because they thought the resolution inaccurately blamed the school system for a problem that county development and zoning policies had created. For example, one community member wrote, "Your development policies are the root of the problem and need to be corrected," and added, "This resolution forcing social engineering on the residents of the county will not be forgotten come re-election time" (8/15/19 Written Testimony).

Similarly, a River Hill parent argued:

I understand and do *not* oppose the idea and purpose behind CR-112 ... but I do very much oppose the resolution telling the Board of Education to achieve this goal through redistricting. ... Racial and socioeconomic disparities are not caused by HCPSS but mainly due to poor zoning and development decisions made in the past (9/26/19 County Council meeting).

A Black interview participant further argued that CR-112 "was very lazy" because "it excluded that the main reason we have an issue in Howard County is because of terrible zoning and land-use decisions." But while these community members seemed to be *advocating* for changes to

development and zoning policies in lieu of redistricting, whether they would have *supported* these changes remains an open question.

A smaller number of written responses to CR-112 were overtly racist and anti-Black; many of them argued that Black children were intellectually inferior to children of other races or that Black families did not value education as much as families of other races. For example, community members wrote things like, “It is not racism. It’s lazy, good for nothing Blacks that have ruined Columbia;” “All the council will do [with CR-112] is *dumb down* all of Howard County schools;” “Blacks destroy school systems and schools;” and “Black families, as a core group, don’t value education like other cultural groups” (Rios, 2019). Several of these authors identified as Black residents of Columbia. However, Council Chair Christiana Rigby mentioned in one public hearing that many of these overtly racist comments came from fake addresses, so it is unclear who wrote them. One Black interview participant, who opposed CR-112, even argued that Democratic officials in the county, whom he called “the establishment,” submitted racist testimonies in an attempt to garner support for the resolution and divert attention from the fact that county development and zoning policies were responsible for creating segregation. He claimed that others shared this belief, too. In his words:

If you look at the [CR-112] testimony, the written testimonies, there was some ... I think this was done by some members of the establishment. They will write anonymous letters or emails that were ... extremely laced with racist language. It was just racist in content. I think that that was written to intentionally confound the debate and divert it from what was really an issue [development and zoning policies]. ... You have a lot of people who are opposing it [CR-112] for many legitimate reasons, and it was a way to undermine

their argument. ... I think this view is shared by a lot of people, that it was intentionally done.

However, this participant also acknowledged that he had “no proof” that the testimonies were planted by advocates of CR-112.

Amid the torrent of opposition, a small group of community members supported CR-112. These community members generally acknowledged that they also supported Superintendent Martirano’s redistricting plan, and indicated that their support for both the resolution and the recommendation was grounded in a desire to desegregate schools. For instance, one parent wrote, “I am in favor of CR-112 and integrating our schools by income. All children deserve the best education that we can give them!” (9/9/19 Written Testimony). Another resident, from Ellicott City, said, “I support this resolution. It is time we all work together to do the right thing for our children” (9/19/19 Written Testimony). Yet another community member encouraged for the council to pass CR-112, arguing, “This is an important point in history for Howard County. Please take this important step toward breaking the system of continuous oppression” (8/15/19 Written Testimony). Interestingly, a few community members who supported CR-112 also called on the county council to address segregative development and zoning policies. For example, one community member wrote, “I fully support the council resolution calling for the Howard County Public School System to develop an integration plan. ... Since county policies over the years have helped to create this segregation” (8/15/19 Written Testimony). However, unlike opponents of CR-112, this group seemed to believe that *both* the district *and* the county were responsible for segregation, rather than just the county.

County Councilmembers’ Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Although the Howard County Council did pass CR-112, councilmembers had few sources of power to influence the school board's decision about what redistricting plan to enact (if any). As councilmembers made clear at several CR-112 hearings, they had no formal authority over the redistricting process. Furthermore, while they had the power to legislate in the general governance arena, which they did through CR-112, that legislation had no bearing on what the school district and board could or could not do. Several interview participants acknowledged the council's limited power. For example, one councilmember explained, "It's just a resolution. It's not binding. It just says how you feel." Likewise, a parent who supported CR-112 described it as "ceremonial, basically making a statement. Trying to, you know, influence [the redistricting process] a little bit, knowing that they [councilmembers] didn't have any direct influence." In the end, the council's limited power meant that County Resolution 112 was purely symbolic.

While the resolution itself was symbolic, the response it generated from the community appeared to have a more substantial impact on the enactment phase of the redistricting process. Parents and other community members came out in force to oppose CR-112, and, given the timing of the press release that announced CR-112 in the initiation phase, many of them viewed it as an extension of Superintendent Martirano's proposed redistricting plan. The superintendent tried to distance the plan from CR-112 by stating that it did not influence his recommendation, and the councilmembers who introduced CR-112 made clear that they did not endorse Martirano's plan or any other proposal. But the two remained inextricably linked in the eyes of most community members, which became problematic for district officials and the school board. Whereas the superintendent appeared to intentionally use race-neutral language like "equity" and "balance" to describe his desegregation plan, the council used language that many community

members viewed as inaccurate and divisive. Thus, while the resolution and the superintendent's plan shared the goal of desegregating schools, the resolution's language may have made desegregation more politically contentious, and thus more difficult, for the superintendent and school board members. To be sure, it is possible that the community would have responded to the superintendent's plan with as much vitriol even if the council had not introduced CR-112, but many interview participants agreed that the resolution "fanned the flames" of redistricting. For example, one parent suggested that the resolution "certainly played a role in the emotion [of redistricting]." Another parent who supported the resolution said, "I don't know that it [CR-112] helped [with desegregation]. I think just a lot more racism came up." Yet another parent agreed that CR-112 made redistricting "entirely about racism," which he thought distracted from meaningful conversations about how redistricting could advance equity. Overall, it appeared that the timing and language of CR-112 detracted from its goal of advancing desegregation. Councilmembers' decisions to introduce and pass CR-112 indicated their political will to influence the redistricting process, but they could have deployed their limited sources of power to influence the process more skillfully. Instead, as one interview participant suggested, "it completely backfired on them."

The Board of Education's Work Sessions

On October 17th, 2019—ten days after the Howard County Council passed CR-112—the Howard County Board of Education began work sessions to discuss whether and how they would move forward with redistricting. The board held nine work sessions in total. At every one, community members lined up to get a seat; some were even forced to watch online from home or an overflow room at the board's headquarters. As for the public hearings, most in attendance appeared to oppose the superintendent's plan, as well as others that individual board members

would propose. Community members continued to wear shirts indicating their opposition to particular plans and their desire to stay at a particular school and/or with their neighbors. Many of those who attended work sessions were Asian, and most wore shirts or held signs that referenced River Hill High School.

Although many community members were present at the work sessions, they were not allowed to participate. Instead, board members took center stage. In meetings that lasted up to ten hours, board members painstakingly discussed whether and how to redraw attendance boundaries for individual neighborhoods at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Superintendent Michael Martirano, representatives from HCPSS's Office of School Planning (OSP), and the redistricting consultants the superintendent had worked with to develop his recommendation also attended each work session. When considering particular "moves," or decisions to redistrict students from one school to another, board members often asked OSP staff or the consultants how those decisions would affect schools' capacity utilization and FRPM rates. Eventually, after more than 60 hours of meetings across nine days, the board voted to enact a redistricting plan that was different from the superintendent's recommendation but still claimed to alleviate school capacity issues and address socioeconomic segregation. The following sections describe what happened at these work sessions and how community members responded to them via written testimony, which continued to flood board members in the month leading up to their final vote on November 21st.

Moving Away from the Superintendent's Plan

The first work session began with several school board members sharing their goals for redistricting, in front of a full audience. Chair Mavis Ellis started by explaining that the board would consider all aspects of Policy 6010—including facility utilization, community stability,

and student demographics—but acknowledged that “not all [factors] can be met simultaneously” (10/17/19 Board of Education Meeting). Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs followed by reminding the audience that “capacity is the driving force for redistricting,” but added that “enhanc[ing] integration ... should be a goal for our world-class school system” (10/17/19 Board of Education meeting). Similarly, board member Chao Wu claimed that his priorities were to “optimize capacity and achieve equity” (10/17/19 Board of Education meeting), although he also emphasized the importance of community stability because, in his words, “we don’t want to start a revolution” (10/17/19 Board of Education meeting). Other board members who spoke discussed the importance of resolving overcrowding. In addition to stating their goals for redistricting, board members each disclosed whether the polygons in which they lived were proposed to be redistricted to new schools under the superintendent’s plan. The only member who would have been impacted by the plan was Chao Wu, who lived in River Hill.

It appeared that, prior to this work session, board members had agreed *not* to use Superintendent Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan as a starting point for their deliberation. Instead, they decided to begin by exploring boundary adjustments at high schools in the eastern part of the county, where overcrowding was concentrated. This decision was the first of many that led interview participants and other community members to perceive that the board took specific boundary adjustments into their own hands, rather than basing their decisions on analyses conducted by OSP and the consultants. Several interview participants recalled how board members “scrapped” the superintendent’s plan before discussing it publicly. For example, one AAC member said, “I think that what the superintendent proposed and what eventually came out was board members saying, ‘Okay, forget the superintendent’s plan. We’ve got to work on a whole new plan.’” Participants generally agreed that board members chose not to use the

superintendent's plan as a starting point because of the negative feedback it received from the community. As one parent explained:

I think it was just the outrage [that led them not to use the superintendent's plan]. There was just so much pushback. Just so many people, just hours and hours and hours of people coming in and telling them how awful they are. The national news attention, the protests, people showing up at people's houses. They did not want to deal with that. I think that really, really affected the process.

Indeed, the board received positive feedback from community members after it was clear that they were not going to work from the superintendent's recommendation (10/21/19 Written Testimony).

After the board turned away from the superintendent's plan, he appeared to take a step back from the redistricting process. He had no formal authority to influence the process during the enactment phase, and while he attended every work session, he rarely spoke. One interview participant suggested that he had "bowed out" of redistricting. She added that she was disappointed that the superintendent did not do more—at least publicly—to stand up for the equity-oriented redistricting plan he had proposed. In her words:

When his plan was rejected by the board, I felt he had a defeatist attitude. He no longer fought for what he felt, or what he said he felt was the right thing, because, at that point, he could have reminded the board that it was not their purview to make a plan. That they should come back to him with what they wanted and he, with the consultants, could make a plan that they could vote on. I personally think he wasn't vocal enough about that, about doing what he needed to do as the superintendent. ... The superintendent

didn't say, "Look, this is not what you should be doing." Nobody did that. They just let the chips fall where they may and that wasn't good for anybody.

Overall, the board's decision to move away from the superintendent's proposed redistricting plan foreshadowed the chaos to come in future work sessions, which frustrated both opponents of and advocates of redistricting.

Putting the Cart before the Horse

Before they even discussed a strategy for determining potential attendance area adjustments, school board members voted to exempt certain groups of students from redistricting. Early in the first work session, board member Vicky Cutroneo—identified by interview participants as a more conservative member of the board—moved to exempt rising juniors from redistricting; she argued, "This is a promise we should make [to the community]" (10/1/19 Board of Education meeting). While board member Jen Mallo, whom interview participants classified as a liberal, expressed concerns that they were "leaping before we look" (10/1/19 Board of Education meeting) by addressing exemptions before determining boundary adjustments, she and every other board member voted in favor of Cutroneo's motion. Following the board's vote to exempt rising juniors, Chao Wu, whom interview participants also classified as conservative, motioned to exempt rising fifth and eighth graders, although his motion was not seconded. Immediately after Wu's failed motion, board member Christina Delmont-Small—considered by interview participants to be the most conservative member of the board—motioned to exempt children with disabilities and children who had parents in the military. Again, the motion fell flat. Later in the work session, Delmont-Small motioned to exempt students who walked to school from redistricting; in her words, "to keep walkers as walkers" (10/1/19 Board of Education meeting). While Vicky Cutroneo and Chao Wu quickly seconded

her motion, other board members were hesitant to support her request. For example, Chair Mavis Ellis argued that, while she would like to allow walkers to remain walkers, she thought it was “too early” to make that decision (10/1/19 Board of Education meeting). Similarly, board member Sabina Taj suggested that preemptively exempting walkers from redistricting could minimize the board’s ability to reduce socioeconomic segregation. She explained that, if they voted to exempt walkers, they would “throw in the towel” for desegregating high-FRPM schools to which the majority of students walked (10/17/19 Board of Education meeting). After much discussion, Delmont-Small’s motion failed; she, Cutroneo, and Wu were the only three who voted in favor of it.

While only one motion to exempt a group of students from redistricting passed, board members’ efforts to exempt multiple groups of students from a plan they had yet to create suggested that some of them were hesitant to enact a plan as comprehensive as they had promised when they initiated redistricting that January. Unsurprisingly, the three more conservative members of the board—Vicky Cutroneo, Chao Wu, and Christina Delmont-Small—were the ones who proposed each category of exemptions. Also unsurprisingly, the majority of audience members at the work session and many community members who submitted written testimony after the session expressed *support* for the efforts these three board members made to mitigate the potential impact of redistricting on different groups. For instance, two days after the work session, a River Hill parent wrote to the board, “The decision to keep rising juniors and seniors in their current schools is an excellent one” (10/19/19 Written Testimony). This parent’s language was inflated, given that rising seniors were not included in any redistricting plans, per Policy 6010. Delmont-Small also received applause for motioning to exempt walkers, and many parents submitted testimony in support of her attempt. For example,

one Columbia parent argued that not exempting walkers had the potential to increase HCPSS's transportation costs and decrease students' physical activity:

I am writing to express my concern over the failure to pass the motion to keep walkers as walkers. I am hopeful that the failure to pass this motion does not indicate the board's plan to continue to recklessly advocate for increased transportation costs and decreased physical activity for our students. Failure to keep walkers as walkers to their current school is based on flawed logic and seriously undermines the fiscal responsibility the board has to Howard County (10/19/19 Written Testimony).

Another parent agreed:

This is about the well-being of our children. You are in a position to promote and encourage healthy living and an active lifestyle. This decision will take away an opportunity for a child to begin their day with physical activity resulting in an overall improvement to their health (10/19/19 Written Testimony).

Yet, not all community members supported these exemptions. Several continued to submit written testimony in support of the superintendent's plan. One Oakland Mills parent even agreed with Sabina Taj that exempting walkers would limit the board's ability to address segregation, particularly in high-poverty elementary schools in Columbia, like Stevens Forest, which at the time had an FRPM rate of 58%. This parent warned, "If walkers must stay walkers, I don't know how we can lower this number" (10/19/19 Written Testimony).

Proposing New School Assignment Plans

At the second work session, board members Jen Mallo and Chao Wu each introduced their own redistricting proposals, which they called "test scenarios." Mallo argued that her proposed plan would keep walkers as walkers, keep communities intact, minimize travel times to

school, and enhance school diversity. She also said that she considered community input when developing her proposal and left some polygons, or neighborhoods, “untouched” because of their feedback on the superintendent’s plan (10/28/19 Board of Education meeting). Mallo’s test scenario would redistrict more students than the superintendent had recommended. On the other hand, Wu argued that his proposal did not redistrict any walkers and moved fewer students than the superintendent had recommended moving. Both Mallo and Wu claimed that they considered FRPM rates when creating their plans. For example, Wu said that, with his plan, he attempted to bring school FRPM rates below 5% up and FRPM rates above 45% down. However, both board members had created their plans using redacted FRPM data, meaning that schools with FRPM rates less than or equal to 5% were displayed at 5%, rather than their true percentages. Their reliance on redacted data suggested that they likely had worked offline—that is, without the Office of School Planning or consultants, who had access to unredacted FRPM data—to develop their plans.

Upon board members’ requests, Chao Wu presented a comparison of the three proposed redistricting plans—his, Mallo’s, and Martirano’s—at the following work session. He referred to his presentation an “objective comparison” of the proposals’ potential effects on capacity utilization, FRPM rates, and community stability (10/30/19 Board of Education meeting). During his presentation, Wu claimed that his proposed plan would move fewer students than both Mallo’s and Martirano’s plans and move the fewest walkers, which made it the most cost-effective. According to Wu, there were only slight differences in the capacity utilization and FRPM projections for the three plans. However, Mallo’s plan was projected to bring more schools within the target capacity range and Martirano’s plan was projected to bring more schools closer to the district’s average FRPM rate. Ultimately, Wu claimed that his plan

“achieves similar benefits [to Mallo’s and Martirano’s plans] while imposing significantly less risks, and it is the most cost effective” (10/30/19 Board of Education meeting). Mallo responded by arguing that Wu’s plan did not adequately address overcrowding—particularly at Howard High School, where it was most severe. She then suggested that the board start their deliberation of attendance boundary adjustments by reviewing her proposal and Wu’s proposal and looking for areas of agreement. At this point, it seemed clear that the board was no longer considering enacting Superintendent Martirano’s recommendation, or even a modified version of it.

While Jen Mallo and Chao Wu proposed their own versions of redistricting plans, board member Christina Delmont-Small suggested that HCPSS consider a “feeder system,” which would prevent the need to redistrict in the future. In short, a feeder system would ensure that students from a given neighborhood always attended a given elementary, middle, and high school. Delmont-Small officially introduced a draft of her proposed feeder system in the fourth work session; she referred to it as a “proof of concept” plan (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). While several board members, including Wu and Cutroneo, indicated some support for a feeder system, other board members expressed concerns. For example, Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs questioned why some HCPSS elementary schools were listed on her proposed feeder system twice. Several interview participants also noted that Delmont-Small had forgotten to include some Title I elementary schools in her plan; they viewed this as further indication that she had little concern for low-income schools. As one Oakland Mills parent explained, “She [Christina Delmont-Small] left out like seven Title I schools like they didn’t even exist. She just forgot about them.” Furthermore, board member Sabina Taj, whom many interview participants indicated was a staunch advocate for students of Color and educational equity, argued that a feeder system would simply institutionalize school segregation. She explained:

This [a feeder system] would be a beautiful thing if we didn't have a history of slavery, of segregation. ... If we had housing policies that didn't include redlining. ... If we had a community that could deal with economic diversity (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting).

She further suggested that, given those problematic realities, a feeder system would be “unconscionable” (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). Board Chair Mavis Ellis agreed with Taj's statements, arguing that “we have to look at socioeconomic status and FARMs rates that are highly concentrated in some areas. ... This is a rich county but it is not rich for everyone” (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). Delmont-Small responded to Taj's and Ellis's remarks by arguing that the school board should not be responsible for addressing segregation for which the county government was responsible. In her words:

I find it frustrating ... that the BOE and the school system is being blamed for decisions made by other elected bodies and continue to be made by other elected bodies. Housing is not in the lane of the Howard County Public School System or the Board of Education. Yes, we have to deal with the result of it, but we're not going to change that. I wish that there was some way that the school system could change the socioeconomic status of a family, but unfortunately, that too is not our responsibility nor do we have the tools or the expertise to do that. ... I do not agree with the statement regarding segregation because as anyone who knows me, that is not my desire. My desire is to look at the county and to provide an option so that we can have a discussion. ... We as a Board need to respect our community and to me that means we need to respect the parents who have made decisions for their families as to where they want to raise their families and how they want to raise their families in Howard County. (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting).

Delmont-Small's belief that the county government, rather than the school board or school system, was responsible for combatting segregation reflected many community members' claims that redistricting would not address the "real problem." In contrast, board members Taj and Ellis believed that, in Taj's words, "it *is* our responsibility, and it is not outside of our wheelhouse to address the inequity in our school system, to address the segregation in our school system" (11/5 work session). This exchange made clear that board members had competing perspectives about their capacity and responsibility to address socioeconomic segregation through redistricting.

Despite the long and contentious conversation that Christina Delmont-Small's proposed feeder system generated, it did not get off the ground. Instead, the board continued to consider potential boundary adjustments from Jen Mallo's and Chao Wu's proposed redistricting plans. As the following sections discuss, although these plans were not "institutionalizing segregation" as some board members thought a feeder system would, neither of them would have reduced socioeconomic segregation; in fact, both plans would have *increased* it. Furthermore, the versions of their plans that were shared at board meetings and available to the community only included projections for schools' capacity utilization and FRPM rates. Thus, whether and to what degree their proposals could have affected racial/ethnic segregation in HCPSS is unclear. The fact that neither Mallo nor Wu considered the potential impacts of their plans on schools' racial/ethnic make-up further suggests that the school board may have heeded the guidance that General Counsel Mark Blom offered during his presentation in May 2019 to rely on *proxies* for race/ethnicity when developing student assignment plans.

Prospects of Mallo's Plan to Reduce Socioeconomic Segregation

While Jen Mallo's proposed redistricting plan would have reduced overcrowding at some schools, would have increased socioeconomic segregation slightly at all school levels. In terms

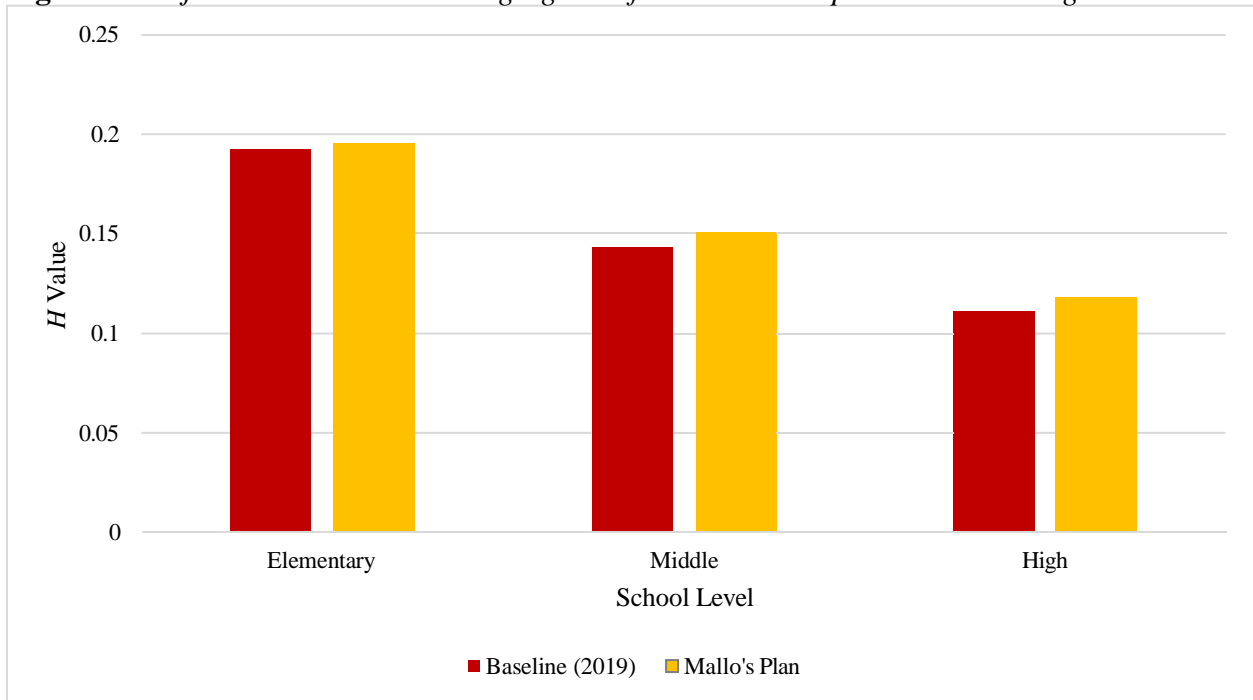
of the distribution of FRPM students across schools, Mallo's plan was projected to increase segregation in elementary, middle, and high schools, but these increases would have been small and would have kept segregation within the moderate range (0.10-0.25) (Figure 9; Appendix F). For example, at the high school level, implementing Mallo's plan would have increased H from its 2019 rate of 0.11 to 0.12. Generally, these findings indicate that Mallo's plan was associated with a slightly *less even* distribution of FRPM students across HCPSS schools than was the case in 2019. In other words, implementing Mallo's plan would have made HCPSS schools slightly less socioeconomically diverse than the district overall.

Results for the interaction index, presented in Appendix H, followed a similar pattern. At elementary, middle, and high school levels, Mallo's plan was projected to decrease the rate at which FRPM students would attend schools with non-FRPM students. Differences between 2019 rates and projections for Mallo's plan were consistent across school levels, but relatively small. At each level, implementing Mallo's plan would have meant that FRPM students, on average, would be attending schools with fewer non-FRPM students. For example, in 2019, the typical FRPM elementary school student attended a school where 63% of their peers did not receive FRPM. Under Mallo's plan, that number would have decreased to 60%. Given that, in 2019, almost 80% of elementary students did not receive FRPM, implementing Mallo's plan would have reduced already disproportionately-low exposure of FRPM to non-FRPM students.

Prospects of Wu's Plan to Reduce Socioeconomic Segregation

Like Mallo's plan, Chao Wu's proposed redistricting plan was projected to reduce overcrowding in some schools, but to increase socioeconomic segregation across elementary, middle, and high schools more than Mallo's plan. Results for H (Figure 10; Appendix F) indicated that implementing Wu's plan would have kept segregation within the moderate range

Figure 9. Projected Socioeconomic Segregation for Mallo’s Proposed Redistricting Plan



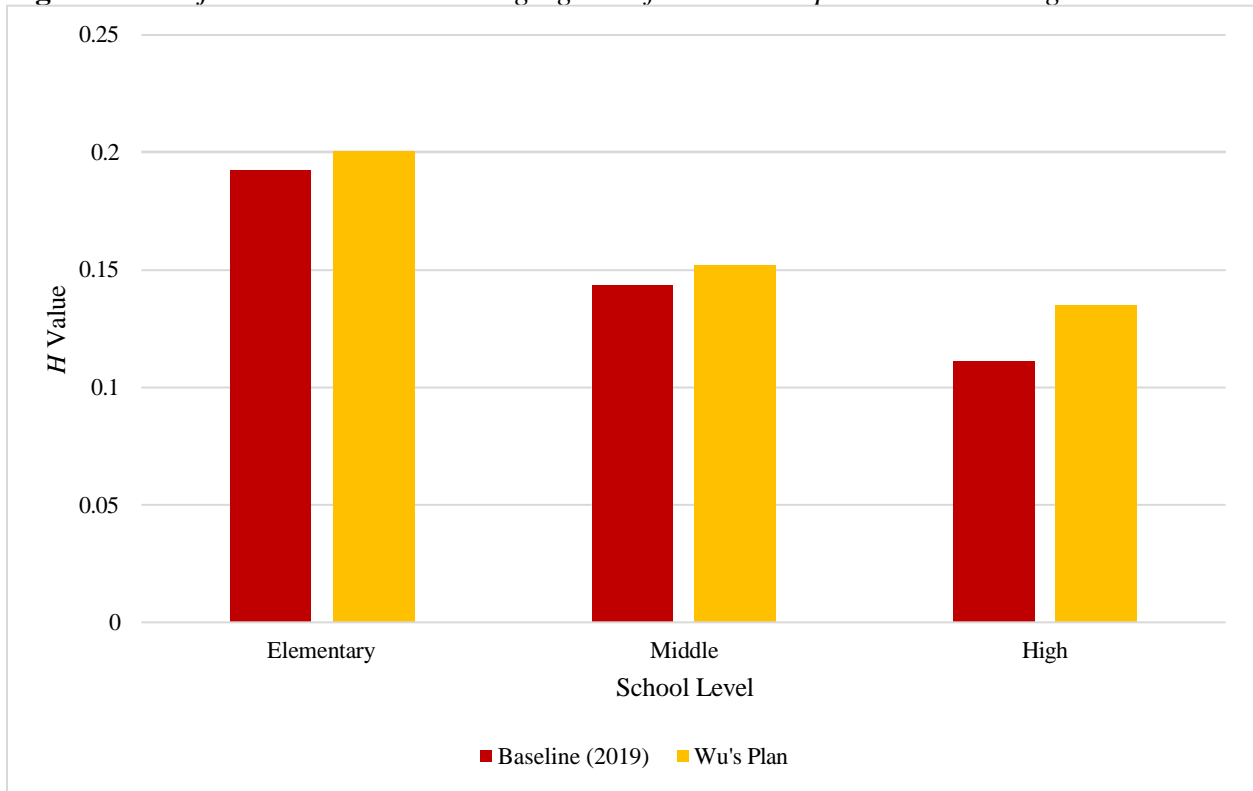
Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

but increased it, if only slightly. The largest projected increase was at the high school level, where Wu’s plan was projected to increase segregation from 0.11 to 0.14. Thus, like Mallo’s plan, Wu’s plan would have made HCPSS elementary, middle, and high schools less socioeconomically diverse than the district overall.

Results for the interaction index (Appendix H) were similar to those associated with Mallo’s plan. Generally, Wu’s plan was projected to decrease the exposure of FRPM students to non-FRPM students *more* than Mallo’s plan would have. Still, projected decreases were relatively small. Overall, then, both the redistricting plans proposed by Mallo and Wu were projected to increase racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation relative to 2019 rates, and, accordingly, did not have the potential to desegregate schools like Superintendent Michael Martirano’s recommended plan.

Community Responses to the Mallo and Wu Plans

Figure 10. *Projected Socioeconomic Segregation for Wu’s Proposed Redistricting Plan*



Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

Overall, community members tended to prefer Chao Wu’s proposed redistricting plan to Jen Mallo’s proposed plan. Many community members—especially those from River Hill—perceived that Wu’s plan alleviated overcrowding to an adequate extent while being fiscally responsible and less disruptive to neighborhoods. Some residents also believed that Wu’s plan would improve socioeconomic equity by bringing schools’ FRPM rates closer to the district average, although it is unclear on what grounds they made that assumption. To be sure, their claims were surprising given that Wu’s plan would have *increased* socioeconomic segregation. One River Hill parent said they supported Wu’s plan because it advanced various goals of redistricting while incorporating community members’ feedback:

Dr. Wu’s proposal ... focuses on balancing school capacity while minimizing students’ travel times and improving equity. It addresses the highest number of concerns that have

been addressed by residents in the county that have been heard through testimonies and hearings over the past two months (10/29 Written Testimony).

Other River Hill parents argued that Wu’s plan was “a sound solution that combines fiscal responsibility and limits disruption to the community” (10/30 Written Testimony) and “addresses a reasonable reduction in FARMs rates while still balancing utilization with minimal disruption to communities” (11/3 Written Testimony). Additionally, Howard County Families for Education Improvement (FEI), the coalition that formed in opposition to Superintendent Michael Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan, supported Wu’s proposal. A statement on the FEI’s website suggested that the group supported Wu’s plan because it focused on addressing capacity issues, rather than desegregating schools; in FEI’s words, Wu’s plan “logically separates balancing utilization and capacity from addressing the achievement gap” (FEI statement Wu’s plan). The group further argued that “Dr. Wu’s plan moves the minimum number of students necessary to balance the capacity of schools” and claimed that “minimal disruption to our children is a “win” for us all!” (FEI statement on Wu’s plan).

Overall, Wu’s plan appeared to assuage the Howard County community members who had most vocally opposed the superintendent’s plan: River Hill residents. Indeed, many River Hill residents were staunchly opposed to the superintendent’s plan. Furthermore, most opposed redistricting for desegregation, but supported minimal redistricting to alleviate overcrowding. Given that Wu himself was a River Hill resident, it is also possible that he was trying to put forth a plan that would not redistrict his children out of River Hill schools. One interview participant—an Oakland Mills parent—said, simply, “Chao fought to keep kids out of ... Wilde Lake [High School],” where the superintendent’s plan proposed redistricting many River Hill High School students. Another Oakland Mills parent argued that “Chao Wu’s plan was basically,

‘This is what my district, River Hill, wants.’” He further added that Wu was “supposed to represent everybody, but he wanted to protect them.” Indeed, Wu, like all other board members, was elected as an at-large representative, meaning he was responsible for representing the interests of the county *overall*, not just particular districts within it.

While Wu’s plan received a fair amount of support—particularly from the River Hill community—Jen Mallo’s plan generated opposition similar to the superintendent’s recommendation. In fact, many community members thought Mallo’s proposal was merely a reincarnation of the superintendent’s, even though her plan would have moved more students than the superintendent’s plan and would have slightly increased socioeconomic segregation while the superintendent’s plan would have decreased it at some school levels. For example, one River Hill parent submitted written testimony stating that “Ms. Mallo’s proposal is the revised version of the superintendent’s proposal, and the massive redistricting nature is not changed. Thus, I would suggest the Board of Education not follow Ms. Mallo’s proposing the following work sessions” (10/28/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, another River Hill parent wrote, “Ms. Mallo’s plan is essentially a slightly modified version of the superintendent’s proposed redistricting plan and contains the same flaws and issues that the community identified over the course of numerous nights of testimony and written feedback” (10/28/19 Written Testimony).

Many community members also believed that, above all, Mallo’s plan aimed to desegregate schools, despite the fact that it would have slightly increased socioeconomic segregation. For example, one interview participant who opposed Mallo’s plan and redistricting for desegregation in general, thought Mallo proposed her own plan because of her “hidden agenda,” which, in her view, was “the whole equity drive to shift around and even out FARMs numbers.” An Oakland Mills parent thought that Mallo was trying to do her best to desegregate

low-income schools in Columbia, including Swansfield Elementary School. In her words, “I think Jen [Mallo] wanted to make sure that her area ... was taken care of. I think she was trying to do the best for Swansfield Elementary School, all the schools ... that she felt like were inequitable.” Yet another parent suggested that, because community members tended to associate Mallo’s plan with desegregation, “she sort of became the face of, ‘We hate socioeconomic redistricting.’” Other interview participants described how community members showed up at Mallo’s home to protest her proposed plan, and one even referred to her as “enemy number one” in Howard County.

Overall, community members perceived Chao Wu’s proposed plan more favorably than Jen Mallo’s proposed plan. Although the plans proposed by the two board members were very similar in their projected effects on socioeconomic segregation, Mallo’s plan proposed moving roughly 4,000 more students than Wu’s plan proposed. Thus, it appeared that a key factor in community members’ perceptions of proposed redistricting plans was how many students would be redistricted.

Calling for a Return to the Superintendent’s Plan

In the fourth work session, just over two weeks before the board’s final vote on redistricting, board member Sabina Taj motioned to revisit Superintendent Michael Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan as a starting point for the board’s deliberations, rather than using a combination of the plans that Jen Mallo and Chao Wu had proposed. Taj argued that, unlike the consultants the district had hired to support them through redistricting, none of the board members were “experts in geospatial analysis” (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). She further suggested that building a redistricting plan from board members’ individual proposals left the policy decision up to “personal agendas” (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). Board Chair

Mavis Ellis seconded Taj's motion, and explained that she expected the board to begin their deliberations by "tweaking" the superintendent's plan (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). Other board members were less keen on returning to the superintendent's plan, mostly because they wanted to prioritize community members' perspectives. For example, Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs argued that, while the superintendent's plan may have been a good starting point, school board members know the community better than consultants and are thus better equipped to develop a plan *for* the community. Chao Wu also argued that he wanted to continue developing a plan based on community input. Similarly, Vicky Cutroneo claimed that she did not want to revisit the superintendent's plan because she did not want to "start over" (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). Christina Delmont-Small reiterated that the superintendent provided a "recommendation," and that it was within the board's purview to accept, modify, or disregard it (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting). She further argued that the redistricting process "has done a disservice to the community" and that "we need to listen to the community" (11/5/19 Board of Education meeting).

Many community members also advocated for the school board to return to Superintendent Martirano's plan as a starting point for adjusting school attendance boundaries. Their advocacy stemmed from frustration with the chaos that had ensued after Jen Mallo and Chao Wu proposed their own redistricting plans. One interview participant, a parent who supported the superintendent's plan, said that Mallo's and Wu's decisions to create their own plans "was a disaster, because they are just not qualified to move neighborhoods around." Likewise, another parent argued that developing solo redistricting plans "was not what we elected the board to do. It wasn't within the board's purview to come up with a plan." She added, "It [redistricting] should have gone back to the consultants." Community members who

submitted written testimony advocated for a return to the superintendent’s plan for similar reasons. For example, one Columbia parent wrote:

Please take a step back and consider the plan that the superintendent sent out. ... Trying to move around polygons in the 11th hour and trading them like baseball cards at meetings is not the way to go about this (11/5/19 Written Testimony).

Another community member was particularly frustrated that Mallo and Wu had changed their proposals so frequently and released them on social media, and upset that Delmont-Small’s feeder system did not address capacity utilization or FRPM rates:

I agree with Ms. Taj’s recommendation to start with the taxpayer-funded plan and make adjustments. Introducing now three new plans, randomly over the past few weeks, without notice and not having sufficient time for the community to weigh in is unconscionable. Dr. Wu’s plan was posted on Facebook with at least three different versions. Ms. Mallo’s plan changed at least twice in the same day. ... Ms. Delmont-Small’s chart of feeder schools, introduced for the first time tonight, ... doesn’t even address the capacity or FARMs percentage. ... She didn’t even have all the elementary schools on the slide! ... Please start with the plan that had the most time to be vetted, using data and experts. How is it that on November 5th, a Board of Education member is introducing ... plans that aren’t completely thought through and the vote is on November 21st? (11/5/19 Written Testimony)

Notably, many community members who advocated to return to the superintendent’s plan did not support it outright—they merely thought it should be the *starting point* for revised attendance boundary adjustments. For example, one Oakland Mills parent wrote, “I support Superintendent Martirano’s plan and strongly feel that current alternative proposals are not well thought out and

lack any serious analysis. Although the plan is not perfect, it should serve as a starting point for any redistricting plan” (11/7/19 Written Testimony). Likewise, a Howard High School parent, who acknowledged that they did not support every aspect of Martirano’s plan, argued that it would have been “more logical” for the board to start there. In this parent’s words:

While I may not have supported all components of Superintendent Martirano’s plan, each of the proposed reassignments were logical steps towards the plan’s stated goals of creating a more equitable school system. Each of the reassignments were based on and supported by data. His plan, and the supporting data, were easy to access and opportunities were given for public comment. I am confused as to why members Mallo and Wu are now proposing their own plans, a mere three weeks before the final vote and after the public comment period has ended. These plans have been released only through social media (meaning very few people are aware of them). Surely it would have been more logical, and more transparent, for Wu, Mallo and the other members of the Board to step through Martirano’s plan, discuss its pros and cons, and propose changes to it, one point at a time, instead of each, confusingly, redundantly, releasing their own plans (11/6/19 Written Testimony).

Overall, many community members agreed with board members Sabina Taj and Mavis Ellis that the board should return to Superintendent Martirano’s redistricting plan because it was developed by experts, grounded in data, made available to all members of the public, and shared with adequate time for community feedback. Yet, despite their advocacy, Taj’s motion failed; only she and Chair Ellis voted in favor of it. As a result, the board continued making unsystematic attendance boundary adjustments based on Jen Mallo’s and Chao Wu’s plans.

Trying to Postpone the Vote

School board members continued to propose, discuss, accept, and reject various attendance boundary adjustments in the remaining work sessions. They started with adjustments at the high school level—which had the largest attendance areas and the fewest schools (12)—and did not begin discussing adjustments at the elementary school level—which had the most schools (42)—in earnest until the eighth work session, just a week before the final vote on November 21st, 2019. As the deadline neared, both board members and community members asked to postpone the vote. In the final work session on November 18th, board member Vicky Cutroneo motioned to add one or two extra work sessions in December; she added that failing to add extra work sessions would influence her decisions in the straw vote on attendance boundary adjustments, which was scheduled to occur later that evening. Christina Delmont-Small agreed that additional work sessions were necessary to make “informed decisions” and “treat our community fairly” (11/18/19 Board of Education meeting). Other board members, however, felt strongly that they needed to move forward with the process because the district needed adequate time to prepare to implement the new attendance boundaries in the months that followed. Ultimately, Cutroneo’s motion to add more work sessions failed; she and Delmont-Small voted in favor of it, Chao Wu abstained, and all other board members voted against it.

School board and community members advocated—both in the final work sessions and through written testimony—for the board to postpone their vote on a final redistricting plan for several reasons. Most community members who wanted to postpone the vote thought the process was disorganized and unfair. As one community member wrote, “We are literally waving signs and shouting from rooftops that this whole process is deeply flawed, unjust, rushed, and chaotic. ... Delay the vote. ... Listen to the community!” (11/18/19 Written Testimony). Another community member argued that voting on the 21st, as scheduled, would be “irresponsible”

because the board had still not finished discussing potential boundary adjustments at the elementary and middle school levels. In this community member's words:

There are many more middle and elementary schools than high schools, with more contentious swaps. To try to force all of that work into one week would lead to a poorly executed plan. Even good ideas turn out poorly when rushed (11/7/19 Written Testimony).

Another community member wrote, simply, "This process seems a sham" (11/14/19 Written Testimony). Community members even held a rally at the county's fairgrounds. The purpose of the rally, according to its organizers, was to "come together as a county to oppose the current plan for the redistricting of Howard County schools" (Hardy & Nocera, 2019).

Community members also argued that the board should postpone their final vote because they had not had adequate time to provide input on recently discussed boundary adjustments. For example, one community member from Columbia suggested that the board should not vote on redistricting until they had sought public input:

The changes that were proposed in the recent ... meeting were significant and sudden from the previously proposed superintendent's proposal. With the redistricting timeline, we don't have an opportunity to voice our concerns as a community. I don't see how this is fair and urge you to reconsider the timeline to reevaluate to include our feedback (11/5/19 Written Testimony).

Similarly, an Ellicott City parent argued that the board should delay their vote because "many of the families affected by these redistricting proposals are still learning about them" (11/5/19 Written Testimony). Many parents from the Clemens Crossing Elementary School, where almost 50% of students were White and just 10% received FRPM, wrote to the board as well. These

parents pleaded board members not to move them to Bryant Woods Elementary School, where more than half of the student body was Black and 43% received FRPM, as Jen Mallo had recently proposed. For example, one Clemens Crossing parent wrote:

With only weeks to go until a final decision, new polygons somewhat haphazardly are being thrown into the mix for redistricting. Polygon 132 should not be moved to Bryant Woods, it should remain districted to Clemens Crossing. ... We would like to know the data and projected benefits of moving polygon 132 to Bryant Woods (11/5/19 Written Testimony).

Overall, these community members wanted more time to review the attendance boundary adjustments board members had recently proposed, and more time to try to influence board members not to move forward with them.

Additionally, community members and board members alike advocated to delay the vote because they thought the FRPM data that had factored into many decisions were inaccurate. Late in the final work session, representatives from HCPSS's Office of School Planning noted that slight discrepancies may have existed between the FRPM data they presented early in the redistricting process and the FRPM data they had recently presented. They noted that these discrepancies occurred because the data were coming from two different sources and some data had to be redacted to protect student privacy. Board members Christina Delmont-Small and Vicky Cutroneo honed in on this issue and used it to further advocate to delay the final vote, even though Cutroneo's motion to do so had just failed. After this exchange, several community members also submitted testimony arguing that the board should wait to vote on redistricting until FRPM data had been verified. For example, one community member wrote:

The Board of Education is changing the lives of thousands of children based on data, but you've noted tonight that the data cannot be trusted—specifically with FARMs (which some decisions seem to be almost purely based on). ... What else may not be accurate. Please don't make these changes without verifying the relied-upon data is correct!

(11/18/19 Written Testimony)

One interview participant from the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill agreed. She believed that the board should have paused the process after being made aware of FRPM data discrepancies. And yet, the board moved forward with a straw vote. Consequently, this interview participant believed that, “instead of having it [the redistricting decision] data-driven, it was definitely more politically driven.”

The Board of Education's Enacted Plan

On November 21st, 2019, the Howard County Board of Education voted on the final redistricting plan. Community members had once again flooded the board room, wearing shirts that read “River Hill United,” “Keep Communities Together,” and others that conveyed unity with their neighbors. They also held signs that read, “Kids deserve less commute more sleep” and “Please do not isolate me” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). Before board members began voting on particular attendance boundary adjustments, community members who had signed up for public comment had the opportunity to speak. They were not allowed to address redistricting in their statements. One of the speakers was an Asian parent who was a pediatrician and a leader of Howard County Families for Education Improvement, the coalition formed in opposition to the superintendent's plan. While he did not directly mention redistricting, he shared how “this has been a time of incredible stress” for the community and encouraged the board, and the community members who were watching, to focus on “rebuilding the harmony and peace of

our community” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). He then led the room through a meditation practice, which he thought would help to alleviate the tension of the vote—and the redistricting process, in general.

After brief comments from some board members, the board began voting on motions to redistrict specific polygons to new schools. For the most part, the more progressive board members—Chair Mavis Ellis, Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs, Jen Mallo, and Sabina Taj—voted in favor, while the most conservative board members—Christina Delmont-Small and Vicky Cutroneo—voted against. Chao Wu, who several interview participants perceived as a middle-of-the-road board member who leaned conservative, often voted with the progressive bloc but abstained in several cases.

Given that they had held a straw vote just days prior, school board and community members should have gone into the final vote with relatively clear expectations of what attendance boundary adjustments would pass and which would not. Yet, one motion that proposed redistricting a Clemens Crossing Elementary School polygon to Bryant Woods Elementary School caused quite a stir. In short, this move would have redistricted a small group of wealthier White parents to a predominantly Black, lower-income school. Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs had voted with her more progressive colleagues until this motion. When it came time to cast her vote, she paused, then voted “no.” Given that Vicky Cutroneo, Christina Delmont-Small, and Chao Wu had also voted “no,” the proposed boundary adjustment failed. The audience immediately erupted with cheer, and Jen Mallo—whose own proposed redistricting plan had been the inspiration for many of these boundary adjustments—requested a recess for the board to discuss the “implications” of the failed vote” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). A few minutes later, board members returned to the dais. Kirsten Coombs was in tears. Jen Mallo

quickly motioned to *re-vote* on the failed motion to redistrict the Clemens Crossing polygon to Bryant Woods. This time, Coombs voted “yes,” and the motion passed. As described in the next chapter, this incident frustrated a large contingent of Clemens Crossing parents, who later attempted to prevent the district from implementing that attendance boundary adjustment on the grounds that the board had committed a procedural violation.

After the board had voted on all proposed attendance boundary adjustments, they began discussing exemptions, or which groups of students (if any) they would exempt from being redistricted to a new school. They all voted to exempt students who were enrolled in special programs, including the JumpStart program, which HCPSS had created to alleviate overcrowding at some high schools. Additionally, they all voted to exempt rising juniors (again) and rising eighth graders. All board members but Chair Ellis voted to exempt rising fifth graders. Vicky Cutroneo also motioned to exempt rising sophomores. Given that Policy 6010, which governed the redistricting process, already exempted rising seniors, this motion would have meant that rising freshmen were the only group high school students to be impacted by redistricting. Chair Ellis bristled at her request, stating: “We are redistricting and *somebody* has to move” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). Ultimately, the motion to exempt rising sophomores failed, with the four progressive members voting against it. But even with this motion’s failure, the board had provided thousands of HCPSS students with the opportunity to circumvent the newly enacted redistricting plan. These exemptions—on top of the ones outlined in Policy 6010—had the chance to drastically undermine the redistricting plan’s effectiveness at reducing both overcrowding and segregation. HCPSS released a statement after the vote indicated that the enacted redistricting plan would move 5,402 students—2,007 at the high school level, 568 at the middle school level, and 2,827 at the elementary school level—but it did

not specify whether those numbers included the exemptions in Policy 6010 or the ones on which the board had voted. In closing, several board members made statements about the redistricting process and the plan they had voted to enact. Christina Delmont-Small argued that “the redistricting process is broken” and suggested that the board had “moved students ... out of their communities” and had relied on data that “did not accurately reflect FARMs rates in our schools” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). She received tremendous applause from the audience. Similarly, Chao Wu argued that the board had made a “crisis” out of redistricting by prioritizing socioeconomic desegregation over school capacity issues. Like Delmont-Small had argued in a prior work session, Wu added that “equity cannot be achieved simply by balancing FARMs rates. ... This is a free country and people make their own choices where to live. ... Housing patterns ... cannot be realistically addressed by the school board” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). On the other hand, Chair Ellis addressed the ever-present inequities in HCPSS and promised to continue to try to address them. In her words:

As we look at achievement gaps, it is real here in Howard County. ... I know we have more work to do, and it does have to do with socioeconomics. ... We will continue to look at that moving forward (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting).

Sabina Taj agreed, stating, “We made some progress addressing capacity and equity tonight ... but we have a long way to go” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). Likewise, Jen Mallo claimed that the enacted redistricting plan was “a compromise that we made tonight for all our children” (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting). Thus, unsurprisingly, the more conservative members of the board argued that the board had made a larger-than-necessary issue of redistricting by using it as an opportunity to advance desegregation, while the more progressive

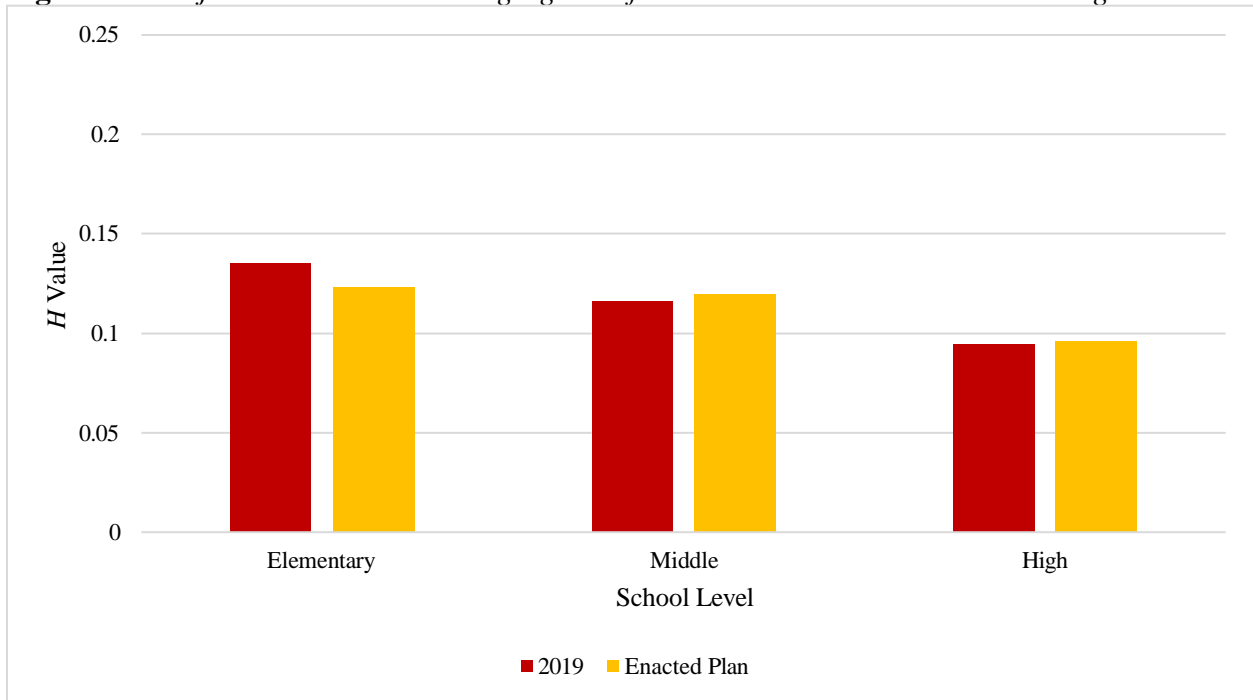
members of the board who made statements argued that the board had made some progress toward equity.

The Enacted Plan's Prospects for Reducing Segregation

The school board's enacted plan was projected to have mixed potential effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS schools. In terms of racial/ethnic segregation, as measured by H (Figure 11; Appendix E), the enacted plan would have decreased segregation at the elementary school level, from 0.14 to 0.12, and slightly increased it at the middle and high school levels. The potential reduction in racial/ethnic segregation at the elementary school level under the enacted plan was very similar to the potential reduction under the superintendent's plan. However, the superintendent's plan was also projected to decrease racial/ethnic segregation at the middle and high school levels. Ultimately, the enacted plan would have kept racial/ethnic segregation at the elementary and middle school levels within the moderate range (0.10-0.25), and kept racial/ethnic segregation at the high school level within the low range (below 0.10).

The projected effects of the board's enacted plan on exposure between students of different racial/ethnic groups (Appendix G) were mixed, but generally trended toward increasing interactions between racially/ethnically minoritized students and White and Asian students. For example, the board's plan was projected to increase interactions between Black and White students at all school levels, although the largest increase was at the elementary school level. The most dramatic increases in exposure were between Hispanic and White and Hispanic and Asian students. At the elementary school level, the board's enacted plan was projected to increase the rate at which Hispanic students were exposed to White students by almost 6%. These projected increases were similar to those associated with Superintendent Martirano's recommended

Figure 11. Projected Racial/Ethnic Segregation for the Board’s Enacted Redistricting Plan



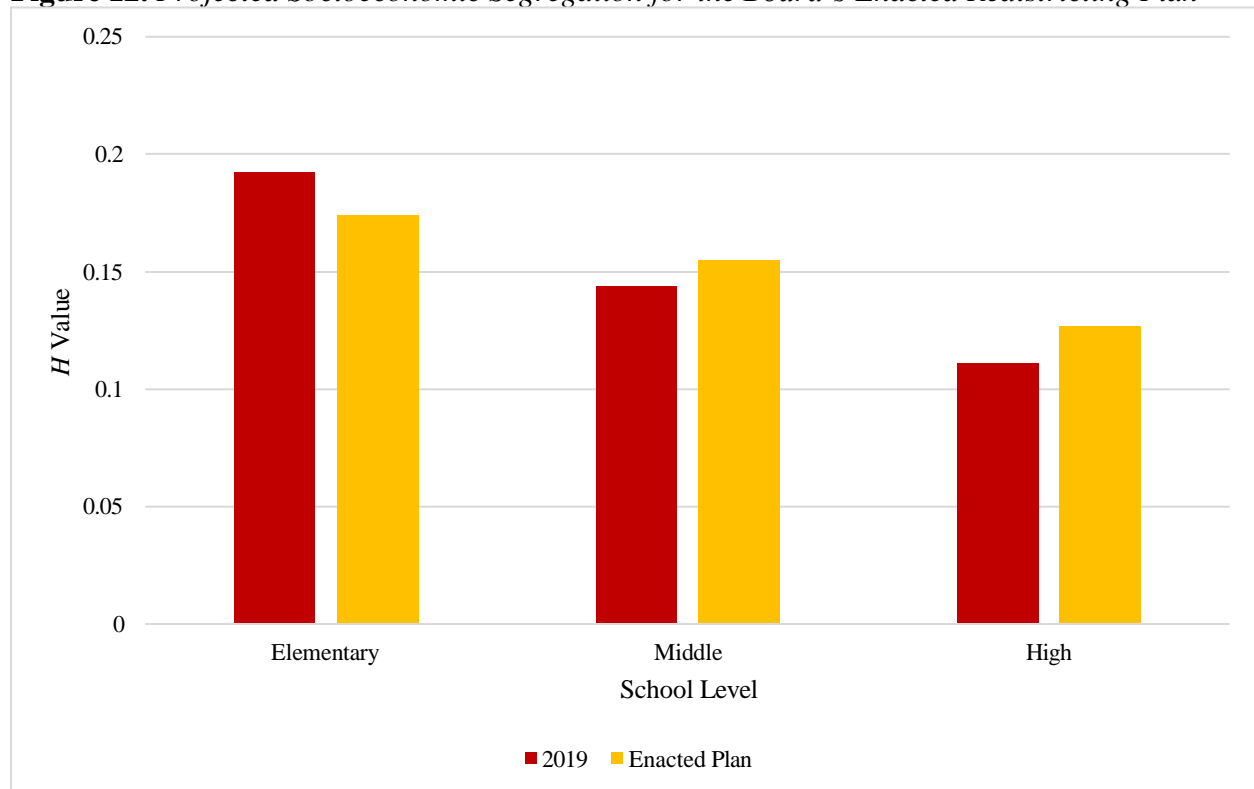
Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

redistricting plan. Overall, while the board’s enacted plan was projected to have similar effects on racial/ethnic segregation to Martirano’s plan; the key difference was that Martirano’s plan would have improved the distribution of Asian, Black, and Hispanic students at the middle and high school levels while the board’s plan would have worsened it.

Results from the *H* index for projected effects of the board’s enacted plan on socioeconomic segregation (Figure 12; Appendix F) were similar to its projected effects on racial/ethnic segregation: the enacted plan was projected to decrease segregation at the elementary school level while increasing it at the middle and high school levels. More specifically, the enacted plan would have decreased socioeconomic segregation among elementary schools from 0.19 to 0.17, which was identical to the superintendent’s plan. In other words, like the superintendent’s plan, the board’s enacted plan would have brought the socioeconomic diversity of elementary schools—as measured by FRPM status—closer to the

socioeconomic diversity of the district. Yet, the enacted plan would have had a negative effect on the socioeconomic diversity of middle and high schools, like the plans proposed by Jen Mallo and Chao Wu. Additionally, while the superintendent’s plan would have also increased socioeconomic segregation at the high school levels, projected increases were slightly larger under the board’s enacted plan. For example, the enacted plan would have increased socioeconomic segregation from 0.11 to 0.13, while the superintendent’s plan would have increased it from 0.11 to 0.12. Overall, the board’s enacted plan would have kept socioeconomic segregation at all school levels within the moderate range.

Figure 12. *Projected Socioeconomic Segregation for the Board’s Enacted Redistricting Plan*



Note: Data are from Howard County Board of Education documents.

Under the board’s enacted plan, results for the interaction index were also mixed. The plan was projected to slightly increase the exposure of FRPM students to non-FRPM students at the elementary level. Interestingly, the enacted plan was the only one that would have increased

exposure between FRPM and non-FRPM students at the elementary level; the superintendent's plan would have decreased it slightly, while Jen Mallo's and Chao Wu's plans would have decreased it more substantially. Like the other three proposed plans, the enacted plan would have also decreased the exposure of FRPM students to non-FRPM students at the middle and high school levels. At both levels, exposure rates were projected to decrease by approximately 3%.

Thus, the board's enacted plan resembled the superintendent's recommendation in some ways, and the plans proposed by board members Jen Mallo and Chao Wu in other ways. Like the superintendent's plan, it would have reduced racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in terms of the distribution of students at the elementary school level relative to the district overall. It also would have improved the exposure of Black and Hispanic students to White and Asian students. Yet, the enacted plan would have also *increased* racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation along several dimensions. These mixed potential effects suggest that, as Jen Mallo indicated, the school board's enacted plan was a "compromise" (11/21/19 Board of Education meeting).

Board Members' Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Board members were, without doubt, the most powerful policy actors in the enactment phase of the redistricting process. They garnered their power from their formal authority under Policy 6010, which sanctioned redistricting. At the most basic level, board members had the power to *vote* on their desired redistricting plan. But they also had the power to accept, modify, or reject the superintendent's recommendation, and to incorporate or ignore community members' feedback. Board members even had the power to come up with their own redistricting plans, despite the fact that many community members (and some board members) did not think they had the expertise to do so.

Board members' power over the redistricting process was most salient after public hearings ended and when work sessions began. At that point, they could determine how to move forward with the redistricting process, whether that meant making attendance boundary adjustments using the superintendent's recommendation as a starting point, or coming up with their own plans based on their own priorities and feedback from some segments of the community. Yet, board members did not appear to be uniformly powerful during this part of the redistricting process. As interview participants described, board members appeared to have varied political preferences: Chair Mavis Ellis, Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs, Jen Mallo, and Sabina Taj were the "progressive" members of the board, while Vicky Cutroneo, Christina Delmont-Small, and Chao Wu were comparatively "conservative." Because progressive board members outnumbered conservative board members, they generally had more power to advance their policy goals. This power differential was made evident by Cutroneo's and Delmont-Small's failed efforts to delay the redistricting vote a few days before it was scheduled. Additionally, many attendance boundary adjustments passed 5-2, with Ellis, Coombs, Mallo, Taj, and Wu voting in favor of them, and Cutroneo and Delmont-Small voting against them. Even without Wu's votes, the progressive bloc of board members would have been able to pass the redistricting plan without support from more conservative board members.

Board members' power generally *increased* throughout the enactment phase, and community members' power generally *decreased*. Board members' ability to decide whether and how to redraw attendance boundaries until the final work session, which was three days before their vote, limited community members' capacity to advocate for or resist particular moves. Many community members suggested that the rapidity and uncertainty of the boundary adjustments board members discussed in the work sessions severely restricted community

members' ability to influence the enacted plan. Both interview participants and community members who submitted written testimonies expressed frustration that the board's process limited opportunity for community input. For example, one interview participant who was a parent said:

What really went off at the rails ... is the plans kept changing constantly and people weren't getting informed, and then they didn't have time to give in their feedback for the plans, and then decisions were made last minute and nobody had the ability to testify against those decisions.

Likewise, another parent suggested that "the communities that were moved at the very last minute were never notified until it was too late. They didn't even realize they were on the table until the day of, and then they got moved." Another community member submitted written testimony, which claimed that it was "very distressing that the board ... is now creating their own plan which the community has no ability to comment on" (11/7/19 Written Testimony). This community member further argued that the board's action "seems totally counterintuitive to the process of community feedback" (11/7/19 Written Testimony).

Parents from Clemens Crossing and the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill—both of whom were redistricted to schools with higher percentages of Black, Hispanic, and low-income students—were particularly frustrated by their limited power at this time. One Clemens Crossing parent explained that, because the board was making adjustments so frantically, "there wasn't a meaningful conversation." She explained:

I found out about [being redistricted from Clemens Crossing Elementary School to Bryant Woods Elementary School] 48 hours before [the board's vote], and just by

happenstance, someone added me to a chat. ... I went and listened, sat in the board room, but I couldn't testify. ... There was essentially nothing that could be done except to go and sit in the board room. We would write [to board members] and they wouldn't respond because they were probably being inundated. I'm not sure they even read my testimony. My husband and I both submitted testimony. ... I don't think a board member could have even read our testimony if they wanted to.

A Pointers Run parent described having a similar experience:

I was not [involved in the development of the superintendent's plan] because originally, what had happened is, we [Pointers Run] were on the first written plan that Martirano made. Once they [board members] started those discussions about what was going to happen, we were pushed to the side. ... We thought we were safe up until that last meeting when all of a sudden that vote changed for us.

Community members from across the county, but particularly Clemens Crossing and Pointers Run, felt that they had limited power to influence the redistricting process once the board began work sessions.

Some interview participants—particularly those from Oakland Mills—also argued that the board used their power to prioritize some communities over others when developing a redistricting plan, even though all board members had been elected at-large, to represent *all* of the county rather than certain areas of it. Two Oakland Mills parents recalled how board members started working on boundary adjustments that would address capacity, FRPM, or other issues for schools in communities that had been “very vocal,” like River Hill. Consequently, they did not spend adequate time addressing issues for schools in other communities, like Oakland

Mills, which also happened to have greater concentrations of low-income students. As one parent explained:

They [board members] would start with River Hill, satisfy all the River Hill things. Then, “Let’s look at Atholton and their concerns,” ... because it’s [where some] River Hill [children attend high school]. ... And it was done at the end and they couldn’t fix anything [for Oakland Mills]. ... It was clear, politically, lower-income areas don’t have any power, so they [board members] don’t really care [about addressing issues in those schools].

Another parent explained how the board’s actions restricted its ability to address capacity and segregation issues at elementary schools in Oakland Mills, which had some of the highest FRPM rates in the county. In his words:

Certain communities or polygons that had been very vocal, some members of the Board of Education pushed them to the front. So certain areas sort of gotten taken care of first, and then when you got down to the end, what was left, it sort of became, “We’ve got very few options, because we’ve already done everything else, so I guess we just do a few things here.” And one of those areas that really fell to the bottom were the elementary schools in my area [Oakland Mills]. They were among the last to get resolved. And by the time you’ve already, like, set the high schools and the middle schools, and you’ve done all the other elementary schools, when you get to those last few that are all in a pretty close geographic area, there’s not a whole lot left you can do, because you’ve sort of locked out all your other options.

Yet another Oakland Mills parent suggested that board members prioritized other neighborhoods when determining a redistricting plan because they wanted to “protect” the areas of the county in

which they lived. In her words, “I think they were all there to, like, protect their personal [interests].”

Board members’ political skill and will during the enactment phase varied more than did their power. For example, Jen Mallo and Chao Wu skillfully took control of much of the process by creating their own redistricting plans. Even though neither of their plans was enacted as is, both served as the basis for conversation about potential attendance boundary adjustments. Thus, the board was more likely to approve a boundary adjustment that aligned with Mallo’s or Wu’s interests. Additionally, Vicky Cutroneo and Christina Delmont-Small used skillful strategies to try to delay the redistricting vote, like questioning the accuracy of the FRPM data board members were using to determine boundary adjustments; this strategy simultaneously had the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the redistricting decision in the eyes of community members. Cutroneo and Delmont-Small also appeared less willing to redistrict than other board members, even though they had agreed that redistricting was necessary when voting to initiate the process in January 2019. All other board members appeared more willing to redistrict, given that they voted in favor of most boundary adjustments.

Chapter Summary: Gauging Influence in the Enactment Phase

I gauged actors’ influence during the enactment phase of the redistricting process by assessing the degree to which their policy goals aligned with the potential outcomes of the redistricting plans proposed by board members Jen Mallo and Chao Wu and the plan enacted by the board, assessing their sources of power, assessing other actors’ perceptions of their power, and identifying instances where actors were excluded from the redistricting process. Overall, board members appeared to have the most influence of any actors over redistricting in the enactment phase. Yet, community members from wealthy, vocal areas of the county, like River

Hill, also appeared influential in the final plan. At the same time, the Howard County Council and community members from lower-income areas of the county appeared less influential.

Alignment between Policy Goals and Potential Outcomes

The school board's decision not to accept Superintendent Michael Martirano's recommended redistricting plan, or even to use it as a starting point for attendance boundary adjustments, suggested that community members who opposed the superintendent's plan—namely, River Hill parents—were highly influential during the enactment phase. River Hill parents' influence appeared to persist throughout the enactment phase: the school board's enacted plan did not redistrict any students from River Hill High School to Wilde Lake High School—a proposed move that had been a major source of resistance to the superintendent's plan—and the plan redistricting few River Hill students to other schools in the eastern part of the county. Other community members, especially those who supported school desegregation, and Howard County Council members appeared less influential than River Hill residents. The redistricting plans proposed by Jen Mallo and Chao Wu were projected to *increase* socioeconomic segregation, and the plan enacted by the board was projected to have mixed effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Thus, none of the plans proposed or enacted during this phase of the redistricting process aligned well with the policy goals of these advocates for desegregation.

Comparing the prospects associated with plans proposed by Mallo, Wu, and the superintendent to the prospects associated with the plan enacted by the board offers a less clear-cut picture of who influenced whom during the enactment phase. Mallo's and Wu's plans would have generally increased socioeconomic segregation, the superintendent's plan would have generally decreased racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, and the board's enacted plan

would have had mixed effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Given these varied projections, neither Mallo nor Wu nor the superintendent appeared to have more influence over the enacted redistricting plan than the others. On the contrary, it is likely that, by proposing their own plans, *all* of these actors shaped the enacted plan; it seems that it was, indeed, a compromise among them.

Sources of Power

Evaluating actors' sources of power suggests that board members were the most influential group during the enactment phase, followed by community members. Most importantly, board members had control over what redistricting plan they enacted because they could vote on it. They also had the power to propose the attendance boundary adjustments they preferred, and were under no obligation to support the adjustments that the superintendent, community members, or county councilmembers desired. While the superintendent and county councilmembers were largely sidelined during the enactment phase, community members had *some* power to exert influence. They garnered their power from their ability to speak at public hearings and submit written testimony, as well as their ability to sue the district, leave the county, or fail to re-elect board members if they were unhappy with the enacted redistricting plan. The electoral power community members held during this phase was likely their most valuable resource, given that most board members were up for re-election in 2020 and appeared intent on running. Nevertheless, given that board members—not community members—made the final decision about which redistricting plan to enact (and whether to enact one at all), community members were only as powerful as board members allowed them to be.

Other Actors' Perceptions of Influence

Considering other actors' perceptions of who influenced whom also reveals that board members and River Hill residents were the most influential actors during the enactment phase of the redistricting process. Many community members who submitted written testimony and interview participants noted how board members paid more attention to those who were most "vocal" during this phase—namely, River Hill parents. Furthermore, several interview participants viewed Jen Mallo as the most influential board member, because the board used her proposed redistricting plan as the starting point for many attendance boundary adjustments. As one parent said, "Jen Mallo ... is viewed as the leader of the school board." In contrast, several interview participants suggested that the county council had little influence over the redistricting process; as one parent explained, "I'm fine that the county council did that [passed a resolution calling on HCPSS to desegregate schools], but I don't know whether it had any effect in the end."

Exclusion of Actors

Little evidence explicitly addressed which actors were excluded from the enactment phase of the redistricting process. However, relatively few community members from lower-income areas of Howard County—including Wilde Lake and Oakland Mills—spoke at public hearings and submitted written testimony. As some interview participants noted, the seemingly low participation on behalf of lower-income families may have been the result of the time and schedule flexibility required to provide input to the school board. Additionally, given that at least some information about potential boundary adjustments was shared via social media, it is possible that families who did not have (or have access to) social media were less aware of the impending decision than others, and thus less able to influence it. Yet, some interview participants also suggested that low-income and racially/ethnically minoritized families were less

involved in the enactment phase because they did not believe that school board members would consider their perspectives. For example, one interview participant who identified as Black and White noticed that the number of Black residents attending board meetings dwindled over the course of the enactment phase. She thought they became less involved over time because “they were not getting anywhere. ... They felt that the loudest voices were getting their way. The last meetings, there were very few Black people in those spaces. ... They made more of an effort in the beginning.”

Chapter 8: The Implementation Phase of Redistricting

The implementation phase of the redistricting process began after the Howard County Board of Education voted to enact new school attendance boundaries on November 21st, 2019, and continued through the Howard County Public School System's implementation of those boundaries in Fall 2020. Following widespread resistance to redistricting proposals from Superintendent Michael Martirano's and the school board during the enactment phase, community members used a variety of strategies to prevent or circumvent the new attendance boundaries. Opponents continued to argue that implementing the board's redistricting plan would divert critical funds from other needs and that it would be unfair to force redistricted students to attend new schools in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led HCPSS to transition to virtual learning in Spring 2020. Some community members sued HCPSS and the school board for what they believed were improprieties in the redistricting process, and many others left HCPSS for private schools in the county. But community members were not the only policy actors who attempted to exert influence during the implementation phase: Howard County Council members and Howard County State Delegates introduced legislation that not only had the potential to impact future HCPSS redistricting efforts, but also had the potential to influence HCPSS and the Howard County Board of Education at the time.

Community Responses to the Board's Enacted Redistricting Plan

After the school board voted to enact the new school attendance boundaries, Superintendent Martirano and his staff took over the redistricting process. Martirano appeared relatively pleased with the board's decision. In a statement made shortly after the vote, he said, "I feel strong in the board-approved plan. ... Maybe not the numbers we wanted to achieve, but we can all endorse it because many hands have made that better, many voices have made that

better” (Nocera, 2019o). He appeared to be referring to the fact that board members, community members, and other policy actors had influenced the final redistricting decision, and had, perhaps, watered it down from what he had originally proposed. Regardless of Martirano’s feelings about the enacted plan, it was now his job to implement the boundaries the board had set. In an early December 2019 meeting, shortly after the board’s vote, Martirano provided a vague update about how he and HCPSS staff were preparing for the transition by “working with principals” and “attending to the needs of students and families” (12/9/19 Board of Education meeting minutes). Although the majority of the board had voted in favor of redistricting, and the redistricting process was now in the hands of the school system, many of the community members who had resisted the superintendent’s and board members’ proposed plans still attempted to influence the implementation of the new school attendance boundaries.

Suing the School Board

Some of the community members who threatened to sue HCPSS if the redistricting plan went through appeared to fulfill their promise: several lawsuits were filed against the Howard County Board of Education in the aftermath of their redistricting decision. For example, some parents sued the school board on the basis that it used faulty data on Free and Reduced Meal rates to make its decision (Dewani v. Howard County Board of Education, 2021.; Dimitrov vs. Howard County Board of Education, 2020). Another group of parents sued the school board because it did not provide automatic exemptions from redistricting to special education students who had Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans (Ferrante et al. vs. Howard County Board of Education, 2020).

Some community members from the Clemens Crossing neighborhood of Columbia also sued the school board for violating the Maryland Open Meetings Act (OMA), which requires

state and local bodies to hold their meetings in public, to give adequate notice, and to allow the public to view meeting minutes. They argued that the OMA violation occurred when the school board took a recess to discuss Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs' vote against redistricting part of Clemens Crossing to Bryant Woods Elementary School. One of the Clemens Crossing parents who filed an injunction said that he did so because his own child and "many children as young as five years old will suffer imminent and irreparable harm" if redistricted; this parent wanted to void the Clemens Crossing vote as well as all votes taken after it (Nocera, 2019p).

The school board acknowledged the OMA violation shortly after the redistricting decision in both a statement about the issue and a re-vote of the proposed reassignment of students from Clemens Crossing to Bryant Woods Elementary Schools. In her statement, Board Chair Mavis Ellis said:

The board publicly acknowledges and corrects what appears to us to be a violation of the Open Meetings Act, albeit unintentional. ... I want to say very clearly, there was no intent to evade our obligation to deliberate on these important decisions in public or to violate the Open Meetings Act. The intent was to recess and reassess what to do next [after the failed vote], not to convene a closed meeting to do so. (Nocera, 2019q)

Ellis also suggested that board members' discussion during the recess may have impacted Kirsten Coombs' decision to change her vote in support of redistricting Clemens Crossing students to Bryant Woods. In her words, "I think there is little question that there was a quorum in the planning room for all or part of the brief exchange that may have impacted Ms. Coombs' decision to request reconsideration of the vote" (Nocera, 2019q).

The school board voted to ratify the Clemens Crossing move on December 17th, 2019—almost a month after the initial vote. Many Clemens Crossing community members attended this

meeting wearing shirts and signs indicating their allegiance with Clemens Crossing and their displeasure with the board's OMA violation. For example, one person held a sign that read, "Ratification after the fact *does not* legitimize an illegal act" (12/17/19 Board of Education meeting). Before the ratification vote, board members Vicky Cutroneo and Christina Delmont-Small indicated that they did not support the statement that Ellis made about what happened during the recess because it "misleads the community as to what occurred" (12/17/19 Board of Education meeting). Despite the protest, the board yet again voted in favor of moving Clemens Crossing students to Bryant Woods. As in the initial vote, the progressive bloc of board members—Ellis, Coombs, and Jennifer Mallo and Sabina Taj—voted for the move, while the more conservative board members—Cutroneo, Delmont-Small, and Wu—voted against it. Thus, the proposal to redistrict a small group of students from a mostly White school with few low-income students to a predominantly Black school with many low-income students survived.

The two parents I interviewed whose children were redistricted from Clemens Crossing to Bryant Woods, both of whom were White, were very frustrated that the school board *could* and *did* ratify what they believed was an illegal and unfair vote. These parents, along with many of their neighbors, tried to prevent the board from ratifying the vote, not only by filing a lawsuit but also by testifying at board meetings and presenting an alternative redistricting plan that they believed would balance schools' Free and Reduced Meal rates better than the board's enacted plan while maintaining neighborhood schools. One Clemens parent explained how the board disregarded their proposed plan and, instead, pursued moves that she thought were "illegal." She explained:

We put together a plan that did that [balanced FARMs and sent low-income students to their closest school] and they [the school board] wouldn't use that. ... We testified, we

presented it, they had options to vote on it. Instead, they did that ratification vote where they ratified our illegal moves. ... It had been determined they [the moves] were illegal because they were an Open Meetings Act violation. Our moves were illegal ... and they decided to fix them with this ratification vote, which is not allowed according to the board's rules, but they decided that they could do it anyway. They did it and succeeded. In the end, this parent decided to send her children to Bryant Woods, while the other Clemens parent who participated in an interview opted to send her children to private school rather than Bryant Woods. This exit strategy, discussed in detail later in this chapter, appeared to be popular among many parents in Howard County.

Despite efforts to undermine the board's plan, all of the lawsuits were dismissed because the plaintiffs did not provide adequate evidence that the school board's decision was illegal. Several interview participants recalled these lawsuits, and suggested that they were nothing new; as one elected official explained, "There's a lawsuit every time there's redistricting. Every time." But many of these participants still found it shocking that community members were so opposed to redistricting that they spent the time, effort, and money to sue the school board. For instance, one White parent from Oakland Mills had heard that Howard County Families for Improvement (FEI), the coalition that formed to oppose Superintendent Martirano's recommended redistricting plan, "raised tens and tens of thousands of dollars to sue HCPSS." Indeed, the organization's website includes an option to donate to FEI's legal fund, and links to at least six appeals filed in response to the redistricting decision, which they said were coordinated by the FEI legal team (HoCo Families for Education Improvement, 2020a). These appeals claimed that the board's enacted redistricting plan was illegal because it was predicated on faulty FRPM data; violated community members' Fourteenth Amendment rights by causing their property values to

decrease; did not provide adequate notice to community members who were non-English speaking; and inappropriately used individual students' racial identities as factors to determine their school assignments, which violated the Supreme Court's ruling in *Parents Involved* (2007). Like the other lawsuits against the board's plan, though, these appeals fell flat.

Forgoing Redistricting to Save Money

After the school board voted to enact their redistricting plan, their focus turned to the school district's budget. Many Howard County community members took advantage of this shift in policy focus, arguing that potential budget cuts were an important reason *not* to implement the enacted redistricting plan. For example, when the school board considered cutting some music programs, parents wrote letters that the cuts would upset students—especially those who were already “devastated” by the redistricting decision—and that programs like these could be saved if the district did not pay for the transportation that redistricting required. For example, one parent wrote:

When I look at what is being proposed as cuts to our students, I do not see anything as non-essential. Our band and strings programs enhance the creativity in students, give them an outlet for self-expression, build self-confidence, and bolster math and language skills. ... Due to the board's decision to redistrict 5,400 students for the 2020-2021 school year, it is essential that more money be put into the budget to transport students to schools that are outside of their neighborhood. We were told that the Howard County redistricting was necessary to give all of our students a fair education. However, the increased cost of transportation due to redistricting is money that should be spent on the above programming in order to give students a fair education comparable to their peers in neighboring counties (1/16/20 Written Testimony).

Another parent said, simply, “I do not support an increase in transportation costs and transportation services ... for school redistricting purposes” (1/16/20 Written Testimony). Yet another parent argued that implementing the redistricting plan would not only increase transportation costs, but also exacerbate the impacts of bus driver shortages. She further claimed that the district should reallocate transportation money to Title I schools. In her words:

Can we agree that our current transportation shortage will only be exacerbated by approving additional funds that we don't have to bus hundreds more children than we already do? The Board of Education's role is to *help* the children of our community. With all the damage that's been inflicted in the past several months with the haphazard and careless redistricting, *please* think about our kids and how increasing transportation costs will *hurt our children*. If there is "extra" money to be spent on transportation, can that be reallocated to show actual value in the school system? Give it to one of the Title I schools that "need" resources. ... There are many other options to spend "extra" money on, than forced busing (1/16/20 Written Testimony).

Overall, these parents perceived that the increased transportation costs associated with the board's enacted redistricting plan would be better spent on other areas of the budget. These arguments are reminiscent of the “Improve Don't Move” rhetoric used by opponents of redistricting during the enactment phase of the policy process. While these parents did not explicitly say that they prioritized school programming over desegregation, their recommendations to reallocate redistricting funds to music programs or school resources suggest that they did.

After the COVID-19 pandemic hit in Spring 2020, Howard County school board members also considered increasing class sizes and, subsequently, laying off teachers to save

money in their operating budget (Meyer, 2020c). Although the school board and teachers' union—the Howard County Education Association—eventually came to an agreement to avoid layoffs, they did decide to remove teachers' pay raises for the 2020-2021 academic year (Meyer, 2020d). Community members who caught wind of this contract renegotiation encouraged the board to use the transportation budget to give teachers the raises they were initially promised. For instance, one parent wrote:

My daughter is in an inclusion classroom ... and I hear about *every* single person that she interacts with on a daily basis. And now I'm seeing these men and women via Zoom. These employees deserve their [salary] increase. I'm asking that you stay true to what was *previously* negotiated. Please increase their pay as you already said you would. Teaching is a *thankless* job. Teachers and support staff go above and beyond for their kids. Especially in these crazy times, they are doing an amazing job. It is appalling that you would go back on what you already negotiated for them. ... Use the redistricting money to actually pay the employees what you already told them you would. (6/5/20 Written Testimony)

Likewise, another parent explained:

My husband and I are adamantly opposed to this potential solution. ... Perhaps to save money you might consider holding off on bussing students out of the neighborhoods they live in to go to school. As a Howard County taxpayer, I implore you to fully fund the school system's budget. Surely this can be done without laying off teachers, decreasing teachers' salary raises, or further increasing class sizes. (6/5/20 Written Testimony)

Yet another parent argued that the board should not only delay redistricting so it could put more money towards teachers' salaries, but also because the stress of attending new schools during a pandemic would be too much for many students to bear. This parent explained:

I would hope that the two million dollars being spent on the redistricting process might also be considered. ... One, it would provide two million dollars back into the HCPSS budget to help with the [budget] shortfall. Second, it would provide a breath to all of the families and educators who are providing services in these very scary and unprecedented times. ... I implore you to consider this expense on our budget, as well as the mental health and well-being of our students, parents, educators, and communities. (6/5/20 Written Testimony)

As described in the following section, this parent was not alone in requesting that HCPSS delay redistricting because of the pandemic.

Delaying Redistricting Due to a Global Pandemic

Howard County community members also pressed HCPSS to delay redistricting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was unprecedented and had caused tremendous stress on the school system. Like many other school systems across the country, HCPSS turned to distance learning in March 2020 and scrambled to support teachers, students, and their families during the transition (Howard County Public School System, n.d.[b]). The district turned to a hybrid instruction model in spring 2021 and reopened schools fully in fall 2021.

Evidence from both written testimony and interview participants suggested that arguing to postpone redistricting because of the pandemic was a prominent strategy. For example, in April 2020, one parent wrote to request “that the implementation of redistricting be postponed to

the Fall of 2021” (4/16/20 Written Testimony). Her lengthy testimony detailed why she thought HCPSS should delay redistricting:

This virus has had a huge, heart-wrenching impact on our country, state, county, and schools. We are in unprecedented times. ... Postponing this large-scale [redistricting] plan is essential. Although a circumstance out of our control, this situation is not fair to our kids. ... Now, more than ever, they need stability and support. They deserve to have the familiar faces and surroundings they are comfortable with. Redistricted students face a further unknown which will impact their social, emotional, and academic welfare. They were promised a “smooth and orderly transition” with opportunities to see their new school and make new friends. With social distancing mandates, this is not possible. ... Our children deserve a consistent education that allows them to succeed to their fullest potential. They must return to their current school to accomplish this. To argue that redistricting has already been set in place or that money has been spent on various plans is not a valid or justifiable argument. Priorities must focus on the social, emotional, and educational needs of our students and staff. Our children are more important. They deserve better. ... You, our Board of Education, are an elected body that work for the residents and children of Howard County. If you care and empathize for our children, make the decision as a unified group to postpone redistricting. (4/16/20 Written Testimony)

Several interview participants agreed with this community member that HCPSS should have delayed redistricting as a result of the pandemic. For example, one parent from the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill, whose child was redistricted to Swansfield Elementary School, a predominantly Black and low-income school, said that she thought redistricting during the

pandemic was unfair to students. She wrote several letters to the school board, the superintendent, and the Howard County Executive requesting that they postpone redistricting. In her words:

The fact that they pursued the redistricting during COVID, especially for high schoolers, I thought was horrible in terms of thinking of those kids' mental health and just overall well-being. I wrote several letters to the Board of Education and to Calvin Ball [Howard County Executive] and Martirano basically expressing my feelings that redistricting a kid in high school is bad enough, but redistricting during the pandemic is just cruel and unusual punishment.

Another Pointers Run parent whose child was redistricted to Swansfield agreed:

I understand they [HCPSS] put in all the money to figure out the [redistricting] plans and all that stuff, but frankly, to do that to kids during the pandemic ... I think that was super cruel. I don't know why they couldn't have put it off. That was really wrong.

Given that the Pointers Run community was highly active in resisting the board's proposal to move their students to Swansfield, it is unsurprising that some parents from this neighborhood advocated for HCPSS to delay redistricting.

In April 2020, school board Vice Chair Kirsten Coombs requested that the school board and district discuss the potential of delaying redistricting as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other board members, including the conservative bloc of Christina Delmont-Small, Vicky Cutroneo, and Chao Wu, expressed hesitance about moving forward with implementing the new boundaries. In particular, Delmont-Small was concerned the financial impact of redistricting—particularly transportation cost—amidst the pandemic, despite the fact that children were still attending schools virtually; Cutroneo was concerned about students' mental health; and Wu was

concerned about how redistricting would affect students if virtual instruction continued through the fall. Even Coombs, who tended to vote with the more liberal board members, said that she was “concerned with how this process [redistricting] plays out when it’s implemented, when the kids don’t [go] into school in August [and instead] are meeting their teachers online” (Nocera, 2020a).

Despite efforts to postpone redistricting in response to the pandemic, HCPSS moved forward with the new attendance boundaries in Fall 2020. Superintendent Martirano and other school district officials were adamant that they were prepared for and moving forward. One of the district’s leading officials said, “We never sent a message that it [redistricting] was going to be delayed.” She added, “We are really moving along with this process” (4/16/20 Board of Education meeting). HCPSS officials also discussed how they had been preparing schools, principals, and families for the new attendance boundaries for months. Superintendent Martirano shared that “many students and families have already been welcomed and oriented to their new schools” (Nocera, 2020c). Board members who had advocated for redistricting with at least some emphasis on balancing FRPM rates across schools, including Jennifer Mallo and Sabina Taj, supported district officials’ statements about moving forward with the process.

Leaving for Private School

The aforementioned efforts to undermine the implementation of the redistricting plan were fairly infrequent, relative to opponents’ efforts to prevent particular redistricting plans in the initiation and enactment phases of the policy process. Furthermore, these efforts generally fell flat: all lawsuits against the Board of Education were dismissed, and written testimony regarding the budget and the pandemic did not convince HCPSS to delay or abandon

redistricting. Opponents' most frequent strategy appeared to be leaving HCPSS and sending their children to private school.

Many parents—especially those from River Hill—had *threatened* to leave the district for private school, another county, or another state, and interview data and enrollment trends suggest that a sizable group of community members actually followed through. Interview data suggested that the majority of those who exited HCPSS sent their children to private school. For example, one Asian parent from Elkridge whose daughter was redistricted from Howard High School (which was predominantly White and Asian and served relatively few low-income students) to Long Reach High School (which was predominantly Black and Hispanic and served a relatively high population of low-income students), suggested that several of her daughter's friends' parents opted to send their children to private school rather than Long Reach. Although it was sometimes overshadowed by River Hill parents' opposition to being redistricted to Wilde Lake High School, Howard parents' opposition to the board's enacted plan during the implementation phase was clear to this interview participant, who opted to send her daughter to Long Reach. She described how the size of her daughters' friend group dwindled after redistricting:

She [my daughter] used to hang in a posse of 12. ... One-third of that total, their parents put them in private school. They wouldn't send them to Long Reach. She lost friends to private school.

This participant described how the parents who sent their children to private schools rather than Long Reach were not those who had expressed racist opposition to the proposed redistricting plans, or who had argued against the plans because they did not want to desegregate schools, but instead were those who had always claimed that they supported "equity." In her words:

There were people who sent their kids to private school who didn't go to Long Reach whom I had higher expectations of. ... I actually call them the pearl-clutching Democrats now, because after all, they have the "Black Lives Matter" sign in their yard, but when the rubber hits the road in terms of equity, it's just like, "I can't send my child there." My husband was so frustrated. He's like, "What is wrong with these people?" He's like, "We're moving [to Long Reach]."

A White parent from Pointers Run, who opted to send her son to Swansfield Elementary School after being redistricted there, also suggested that she was disappointed in her neighbors who opted for private schools, rather than the predominantly Black and low-income school to which they were reassigned. She explained:

One of the things that really was terribly upsetting to us is that some of our closest friends who lived in our neighborhood [Pointers Run] ended up opting—a massive amount of people in our neighborhood opted to go to private schools. They actually didn't do what was originally intended.

She added that her son, who was White and Indian, ended up having more White friends at Swansfield than he had at Pointers Run, where almost a third of students were Asian, because many Asian Pointers Run parents did not send their children to Swansfield. She said:

My son had more White friends [at Swansfield]. ... The kids in our neighborhood that went there were mostly White, not Asian, because they didn't go there. ... If you looked around, there was maybe another Indian family in the whole school at Swansfield. Where did they all go?

Another interview participant, who identified as Black and White, said that she noticed many White parents decided to send their children to private school. She explained, "The majority of

the people who stated online [that they were moving to private school] were definitely White.” Yet, another parent, who identified as Black, suggested that people of all racial/ethnic groups—in her words, “across the board”—left the district.

HCPSS enrollment numbers (Table 6) reflected these parents’ observations. Enrollment in the district dropped from 58,629 in 2019 to 57,057 in 2020; this number was even lower than the district’s 2018 enrollment, and stood in stark contrast to the steady increases in enrollment in the decade prior to redistricting. Enrollment remained roughly the same between 2019 and 2020 from Asian, Black, and Hispanic students, even though it had been growing steadily for each group. For example, the percentage of Asian students in the district had increased from 16% in 2010 to 23% in 2019, but remained at 23% in 2020. In contrast, there was a decline in White enrollment by about two percentage points between 2019 and 2020. However, White enrollment in the district—both in terms of the number of White students enrolled and in terms of the share of White students in HCPSS—had been steadily decreasing by one to two percentage points a year since 2010. Even so, the drop in White enrollment in 2020 was larger than in previous years: whereas White enrollment decreases averaged approximately 500 from 2010-2019, White enrollment dropped by 1,521 between 2019 and 2020.

Interestingly, the enrollment of students receiving Free and Reduced Meals also dropped by more than 700 students between 2019 and 2020, despite having increased by more than 3,000 since 2010. However, it is possible that this enrollment drop reflects changes to the Free and Reduced Meal program, rather than a decline in the number of low-income students in HCPSS schools. Indeed, a report of the state of U.S. Food and Nutrition Assistance programs, including the FRPM program and school meal programs, indicates that government spending on these programs reached a record high \$122.1 billion in 2020, as a result of the pandemic. For example,

the USDA expanded a summer meal program so that all students in an area, regardless of their income, received free meals throughout the year (Toossi et al., 2021). In other words, as a result of the pandemic, students who had previously needed to *enroll* in the FRPM program received the benefits of the program *without* having to enroll in it. Consequently, these changes may have reduced the rate at which families signed up for—and were reported as receiving—FRPM.

Altogether, qualitative and quantitative evidence about enrollment loss in HCPSS between 2019 and 2020 suggest that redistricting may have contributed to flight from the district—particularly for White families, given that White enrollment rates declined more than in prior years and given the well-documented history of White flight in response to desegregation efforts (e.g., Clotfelter, 1999; Fairlie & Resch, 2022; Zhang, 2011). However, it is very likely that the COVID-19 pandemic also contributed to this enrollment loss. Indeed, enrollment declined in other nearby districts in 2020 too (Peetz, 2021; Tooten, 2022), as well as in the state of Maryland (L. Reed, 2022) and the U.S. overall (Pendharkar, 2021). Furthermore, interview participants suggested that some parents opted for private schools because they were unhappy with how the school district handled virtual instruction during the pandemic. For example, one parent said that parents who could not work while supporting their children’s online learning chose private schools because they opened in person faster than HCPSS. In her words:

There were some kids whose parents have high-level jobs and had to sit next to them, or they couldn’t get the virtual [learning] done. A lot of private schools were in person sooner and they promised that they would remain in person.

Another parent said that HCPSS’s (mis)handling of the COVID-19 pandemic led many families to opt for private schools or homeschooling: “Howard County handled COVID worse than 99%

of the counties in the entire country. That created a huge drop. ... Some people pulled and homeschooled, some people pulled and went private.”

But while it is difficult to separate redistricting’s effects on White flight from the pandemic’s effect on White flight, additional evidence suggests that private school enrollment in Howard County spiked following redistricting but before the pandemic hit. For example, a 2020 news article reported that private schools in the county received an increased number of inquiries and applications from HCPSS parents following the redistricting decision (Tooten, 2020). Additionally, one interview participant who opted to send her children to private school, rather than Bryant Woods Elementary School, said that enrollment at the private school where she enrolled her children “exploded.” Thus, while the pandemic certainly contributed to enrollment loss in HCPSS between 2019 and 2020, redistricting likely did too.

Supporting the Redistricting Decision

Amidst a variety of efforts to undermine or circumvent the redistricting decision, many community members supported it. Most of the interview participants who were redistricted indicated their support for the new attendance boundaries because they thought it was beneficial to send their children (and others) to more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse schools. For example, one Pointers Run parent described how her son wanted to go to Swansfield Elementary School. In his words, “Just because we’re well-educated and have the means doesn’t mean that we’re any better [than the families at Swansfield]... I want to go to Swansfield. That’s what we should do.” This parent further described how the racist and classist rhetoric she heard from her Pointers Run neighbors who opposed redistricting, along with the strategies they used to circumvent the new attendance boundaries—like sending their children to private schools—is what “pushed [them] in the direction of sending him [her son] there.”

Table 6. HCPSS District-Level Enrollment Trends between 2010 and 2019 by Race/Ethnicity and FRPM Status

Year	Total	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White		FRPM	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
2010	50,783	8,117	15.98	10,345	20.37	4,178	8.23	24,785	48.81	8,118	15.99
2011	51,316	8,857	16.73	10,661	20.78	4,358	8.49	24,370	47.49	8,985	17.51
2012	51,829	9,140	17.63	10,885	21.00	4,506	8.69	23,928	46.17	9,388	18.11
2013	52,566	9,697	18.45	11,280	21.46	4,755	9.05	23,368	44.45	10,039	19.10
2014	53,408	10,347	19.37	11,643	21.80	5,052	9.46	22,826	42.74	10,576	19.80
2015	54,619	11,134	20.38	12,212	22.36	5,406	9.90	22,296	40.82	11,377	20.83
2016	55,385	11,762	21.24	12,593	22.74	5,744	10.37	21,654	39.10	11,061	19.97
2017	56,569	12,406	21.93	13,319	23.54	6,067	10.72	21,088	37.28	10,888	19.25
2018	57,671	12,923	22.41	13,789	23.91	6,488	11.25	20,664	35.83	10,941	18.97
2019	58,629	13,325	22.73	14,096	24.04	7,033	12.00	20,256	34.55	11,672	19.91
2020	57,057	13,352	23.40	14,064	24.65	7,106	12.45	18,725	32.82	10,914	19.13

Note: Enrollment trends are based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

While few, if any, community members submitted written testimony during the implementation phase that indicated their support for redistricting, their decisions to attend the schools to which they were redistricted indicated at least some degree of support. As one interview participant said, “For most people, once they had been moved, [they] got over it. They decided to embrace the [new] school.” Similarly, another interview participant suggested that, while some families may have sent their children to private schools, “the loudest voices [in the redistricting process] weren’t the majority.” In other words, he believed that most opponents of various redistricting plans that were proposed did not follow through on their threats to move out of Howard County. As this parent said:

There was a lot of rhetoric. There was a lot of fiery speech. But how many people actually acted on what they said they would do if this [redistricting] happened? ... We didn't see “for sale” signs go up all over the county.

Still, he acknowledged that strategies to undermine or circumvent redistricting during the implementation of the new attendance boundaries may have been muted because the board did not vote to enact the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan, which received the most and the most vitriolic opposition. Put differently, the “compromise” redistricting plan that the school board enacted may have assuaged some opponents of the policy, as several board members intended it to do.

Community Members’ Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

Community members’ power during the implementation phase of the 2019-2020 redistricting process was intertwined with their influence strategies; they garnered power from their ability to file lawsuits against the Howard County Board of Education, to submit written testimonies, and—for those families who could afford it—to leave HCPSS for private school.

Given that the board had already voted to enact its redistricting plan, community members who wanted to influence the process had just three options: 1) influence the board and HCPSS to *postpone* the implementation of the new attendance boundaries; 2) influence the board and HCPSS to *abandon* the implementation of the new attendance boundaries; and 3) *circumvent* the new boundaries by leaving the district.

Those parents who filed lawsuits against the school board went for the second option: influencing the board and HCPSS to abandon the new boundaries. If successful, their efforts would have at least voided the board's decisions to redistrict some neighborhoods, if not the entire redistricting plan. However, the grounds on which parents sued the school board were shaky. Many of them claimed that the district had used faulty FRPM data, although the HCPSS Office of School Planning had explained in a work session that these data were not inaccurate but were simply calculated at different points in time. Additionally, at least one lawsuit claimed that the school board had enacted a redistricting plan that was illegal because it used individual students' race(s) to make school assignment decisions. In reality, both the board and the school system were very careful not to discuss racial/ethnic desegregation as the goal of redistricting. In fact, as described in previous chapters, very few district officials or board members even used the words "segregation" and "desegregation" to describe the policy problem they sought to address through redistricting. The redistricting plans proposed by board members Jennifer Mallo and Chao Wu did not even include data (at least publicly) on the potential implications of their plans for the racial/ethnic demographics of schools. Thus, although parents who opted to sue the school board may have had the financial resources to do so, the fact that all of these lawsuits were dismissed suggests that they did not have the legal standing to exert any influence using this resistance strategy.

Other parents used written testimonies to convince the school board to postpone or abandon its implementation of the new attendance boundaries. While substantially fewer community members submitted written testimony during the implementation phase than during the initiation and enactment phases, some continued to use formal communication to try to sway the board. Those who did skillfully used the district’s budget—which became the superintendent and school board members’ focus after the redistricting vote—to convince them to delay or abandon redistricting. Given that HCPSS did not receive the entire sum of funding they requested from the county, framing redistricting as a budgetary issue—particularly in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic—had the potential to convince some board members to change their minds about redistricting. At the same time, the district had already calculated and shared publicly the costs associated with redistricting, and it was already a component of the budget. In short, district officials were well underway with implementation procedures by the time parents advocated delay.

Parents who moved their children to private schools as a result of redistricting, the pandemic, or both appeared to have the most powerful tool to influence redistricting during the implementation phase: financial resources. Put simply, families who could afford to leave the public schools had the opportunity to exempt themselves from redistricting; HCPSS could not force them to remain within the district if they did not want to send their children to the school(s) to which the board’s plan had reassigned them. Furthermore, given that Howard County is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, it is possible that families here were more likely than those in other districts to have had the financial resources to circumvent redistricting by exiting the school system.

Despite these parents' efforts to postpone, abandon, or circumvent redistricting, community members' political will appeared to fade during the implementation phase. For instance, the number of written testimonies submitted about redistricting during the implementation phase appeared roughly equivalent with the number of testimonies submitted on any given day in the enactment phase. Their reduced political will to influence the process may have been an indicator that they did not have the time or financial resources to sue the school board or move to private school, particularly during a global pandemic when many families may have been busy trying to navigate virtual learning while working from home or struggling to find new jobs after losing their jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

County Councilmembers' Responses to the Board's Enacted Plan

Although Howard County community members' influence efforts during the implementation phase of the redistricting process were perhaps the most prominent—or at least the most visible—Howard County Council members also played a role. Councilmembers did not appear to try to influence whether the school board and school district would implement the new school attendance boundaries. Rather, they engaged in continued conversations about school capacity constraints with board members and district officials. In short, the same capacity issues that sparked conversations about redistricting between councilmembers, board members, and the district in 2019 continued to crop up. The recurrence of these issues suggested that these policy actors would continue to consider redistricting even after the district implemented its new attendance boundaries. For example, in a joint meeting between the council, school board, and district just a few weeks after the redistricting vote, council members discussed the degree to which redistricting would alleviate HCPSS's overcrowding issues. In short, councilmembers, board members, and Superintendent Martirano worried that, even after redistricting, the district

still would not have enough seats for all of its current and future students. Board member Christina Delmont-Small—who had suggested throughout the redistricting process that HCPSS needed to build new schools if they wanted to truly address capacity concerns—said, simply, “We do not have the space for the students” (12/9/19 joint meeting observation). Later, Delmont-Small added that school capacity was an “equity” issue. Her choice to frame capacity in these terms likely stemmed from the superintendent’s decision to frame *redistricting* as an equity issue. In her words:

Equity truly will be having enough seats for every student in Howard County to learn, and that’s what we [the school board, district, and council] need to do. If we don’t have a seat and we don’t have space for them, how are we going to teach them?

Martirano agreed with Delmont-Small. “We cannot redistrict our way out completely. ... It’s still not keeping up with the intensity of the growth [of the student population]” (12/9/19 joint meeting observation). Martirano and school board members used this conversation about capacity to push for additional funding from the county council to renovate existing schools and build new ones. Conversations about capacity constraints continued in the following joint meetings, where councilmembers, school board members, and district officials discussed building new schools and projected population growth.

As conversations about capacity continued, councilmember Liz Walsh, who represented portions of the rapidly growing eastern part of Howard County, proposed legislation that had the potential to slow development and ease the burden of overcrowding on many schools. Her proposed legislation related to the county’s Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO), which many community members, including several interview participants, cited as a policy that had contributed to overcrowded schools. The APFO sets parameters for when a school is deemed

overcrowded, and how long developers have to wait to build in an overcrowded area. Prior to councilwoman Walsh’s proposed legislation, the “waiting bin” had been four years—meaning that developers had to wait four years to build in an overcrowded area, but could move forward with building after four years *regardless* of whether overcrowding in that area had decreased. Walsh set out to increase that waiting period from four to seven years. Increasing the waiting period was likely to be an uphill battle, given that it had been proposed and failed four times in as many years (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting).

Shortly after introducing the modified APFO legislation, councilwoman Walsh spoke about it at a Board of Education meeting. She explained that her intent for introducing the bill was to “control growth” in the county and suggested that extending the waiting period for developers would give the district more time to build new schools that could accommodate a growing student population (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting). Walsh also used her platform at the board meeting as an opportunity to advocate for building the next high school, High School 14, in her district because “that’s where the growth is;” she further added that “people move here [to Howard County] for the schools” and that the school system “is the economic driver of the county” (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting). All seven school board members voted to support the bill and thanked Walsh for introducing it. Although their votes had no official bearing on the council’s decision, board member Jennifer Mallo said that she hoped the board’s support would “make a difference in the votes you get” (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting).

Despite councilwoman Walsh’s efforts to increase the waiting period for development in overcrowded areas and school board members’ support of her proposed legislation, the bill failed. Two councilmembers—Walsh and Deb Jung, who represented parts of Columbia and

western Howard County—voted in favor of it, while three—Chair Christiana Rigby, who represented parts of Columbia; Opel Jones, who represented parts of Columbia and eastern Howard County; and David Yungmann, who represented western Howard County—voted against it. After the bill failed, Rigby and Yungmann shared that they voted against it because it threatened “economic downturn,” which, to them, was an important consideration given that the county was already struggling economically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Nocera, 2020b).

County Councilmembers’ Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

As was the case throughout the policy process, Howard County councilmembers had limited power to influence redistricting during the implementation phase. These actors appeared to possess few, if any, resources to stop the district from implementing the new attendance boundaries—other than those they possessed as community members of the county, like submitting written testimony to the board—and they also appeared to have limited will to do so. Councilmembers did, however, possess some power to impact the frequency and scale of future HCPSS redistricting efforts through their ability to regulate development through legislation. But much to board members’ dismay, councilwoman Liz Walsh’s attempt to gain control over school overcrowding through a stronger APFO failed. The bill’s failure further suggests that the majority of councilmembers were unwilling to help the district manage overcrowding through APFO because it had the potential to be costly for the county’s economy (and, thus, its residents). Their votes against the measure—while not surprising, given the history of failed efforts to increase waiting periods in Howard County—essentially punted the issue of school overcrowding back to the school system.

State Legislators’ Responses to the Board’s Enacted Plan

Whereas Maryland state legislators had remained relatively quiet throughout the redistricting process, several members of the Howard County Delegation entered the policymaking arena during the implementation phase. Generally, these state delegates used their legislative power in an attempt to control *future* redistricting efforts in Howard County, rather than to undermine the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. State policy actors' involvement in the implementation phase of the redistricting process also hinted at additional community involvement. Many community members were displeased with the redistricting process and the board's enacted plan, and it is possible that they tried to prevent or minimize future redistricting efforts by requesting that their state representatives legislate them.

Members of the Howard County Delegation proposed several bills in early 2020 related to redistricting in Howard County, including Maryland House Bill 826 (HB826), which sought to prevent real estate agents from advertising the schools associated with particular homes; and Maryland House Bill 1521 (HB1521), which sought to require contracts for residential property sales to include disclaimers about redistricting. Both of those bills are still sitting in the chamber. School board members discussed these and other proposed bills, and voted on whether or not to support them publicly, at their meeting in early January 2020. As with Howard County Council legislation, board members' votes of support for or opposition to state bills had no formal effect on whether they were enacted, but did indicate their positions on particular issues. The board's vote to support HB826 failed, with conservative board members Vicky Cutroneo, Christina Delmont-Small, and Chao Wu arguing that it was "overkill" and "out of our lane" because they could not and should not be controlling real estate agents' decisions (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting). Their vote to support HB1521 narrowly passed, with Wu and Delmont-Small voting against it again because they perceived that real estate was "not our lane" (1/9/20 Board of

Education meeting). Unlike HB826, Cutroneo supported the latter bill, along with the more liberal members of the board, because she viewed it as “a way to communicate to buyers the reality of redistricting” (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting). Both HB826 and HB1521 were passed by the Howard County Delegation, but neither of them has been enacted yet.

Delegates also introduced two pieces of legislation that would have required the Howard County Board of Education to submit reports to the Howard County Delegation about academic disparities for students who are and are not English learners and for students who receive and do not receive FRPM (Ho. Co. 06-20), and about student attendance, Advanced Placement course enrollment, teacher experience and diversity, and incidences of bias or hate crimes (Ho. Co. 23-20). These bills appeared largely symbolic, since the district already provided much, if not all, of this information to the Maryland State Department of Education. Board members were split in their support for both of these bills, so both votes failed and they did not take a position. Generally, more liberal members of the board, including Jennifer Mallo and Chair Mavis Ellis, supported these bills because they would have added another layer of accountability to document and, subsequently, address educational disparities in HCPSS. The more conservative members of the board opposed these bills because, in their view, they overlapped with reports the district was already required to submit to the state and would require additional time and effort that district staff did not have to spare. Ultimately, neither of these bills passed the Howard County Delegation.

One Howard County Delegate also introduced a bill that appeared to be a direct response to community members’ testimonies about how the redistricting process was unfair because they did not have the opportunity to provide input to the board after the board had adjusted the proposed redistricting plan during work sessions. This bill (Ho. Co. 41-20) would have required

the Howard County Board of Education to allow community members who in a neighborhood that was proposed to be moved in a redistricting plan developed *after* the superintendent's recommendation to provide public testimony before the board voted on that redistricting plan. Although the school board did not officially vote on this bill, the board's legislative committee recommended opposing it; they argued that when and whether to provide opportunities for public testimony during redistricting "should remain a matter of local control". (2/13/20 general assembly legislative report). This bill did not pass the Howard County Delegation.

The two bills with the most potential to impact the school redistricting process in Howard County were Maryland House Bill 1511 (HB1511) and Maryland House Bill 1422 (HB1422). HB1511 would require the Howard County Board of Education to submit an annual report on school capacity to the Maryland General Assembly and the Howard County Delegation. The bill also could require HCPSS to redistrict if directed to do so by the state. In particular, it would require HCPSS to redistrict if enrollment for any school was outside a target capacity utilization of 90-110%, or to submit a report to the delegation outlining their plan to bring schools within target capacity utilization. The board unanimously opposed this legislation because they all thought redistricting should be under *their* purview, rather than the state's purview. Both conservative and liberal board members argued that this bill was a violation of their local control. For example, Christina Delmont-Small argued that the bill "could tie our hands" with future redistricting processes and potential updates to their own policy on attendance boundary adjustments, and Chair Mavis Ellis made clear that she opposed the bill because she is a "strong believer in local control" (1/9/20 Board of Education meeting). The school board even submitted official testimony opposing HB1511 at a hearing for the bill. The bill was eventually passed by the Howard County Delegation.

Whereas HB1511 would give the state power over the initiation of the redistricting process, HB1422 would give the state power over community members' roles in the redistricting process. HB1422 was proposed by delegates in neighboring Montgomery County, and would require all Maryland counties and Baltimore City to establish a community advisory committee when initiating a redistricting process. The committee would have the opportunity to review and provide input on any redistricting proposals being considered by the school board. This legislation likely would have been redundant with the Howard County Board of Education's redistricting policy, which already specified that the superintendent would convene an Attendance Area Committee. However, HB1422 would give more power to the state over who was appointed to this committee and what role they served in the redistricting process. Unsurprisingly, the school board's legislative committee recommended opposing this bill because they viewed it as another violation of local control. The board and Superintendent Martirano also submitted testimony in opposition to HB1422. Like HB826, HB1521, and HB1511, HB1422 was passed by the delegation that proposed it, but has not yet been enacted.

Overall, state legislators' proposal of these bills suggests their desire to have increased oversight of local redistricting efforts, particularly those in Howard County. And while the fate of many of these bills remains to be seen, they would undoubtedly alter the distribution of power between the school system and the state over redistricting.

State Legislators' Power, Political Skill, and Political Will

State legislators garnered their power in the redistricting phase from their formal positions, which granted them the authority to introduce and, eventually, enact legislation that could have affected local school redistricting efforts in Howard County. Although the Howard County Board of Education took stances on state legislators' proposed bills, they had no real

power to affect whether they were enacted. Thus, in this instance, the governance structure in Maryland granted state officials more power than local officials, at least to some extent, and had the potential to change school board members' power over redistricting in years to come.

Unsurprisingly, most school board members bristled at the thought of additional state oversight because they perceived it would redirect some of the power they possessed to initiate, enact, and implement redistricting policies to state officials.

Just *why* state legislators introduced so many bills pertaining to redistricting in Howard County is unclear. However, throughout the enactment phase of the redistricting process, many community members submitted written testimony not only to board members, but also to their county council and state representatives. Furthermore, as described in the previous chapter, several Howard County Delegates released a statement about the redistricting process during the enactment phase, which suggests that they were paying attention to what was happening at the local level, whether because it was of interest to them as state legislators or of interest to them because it was of interest to their constituents. It is possible that these state legislators felt pressure from their constituents to at least symbolically acknowledge the chaos that ensued during the redistricting process, if not try to prevent it from happening in the future. But it is also possible that state legislators decided to use their legislative power in an attempt to regulate redistricting because their constituents—most of whom were not pleased with the redistricting process or the plan the school board enacted—had the power to re-elect them (or not).

While little evidence addressed state legislators' political skill during the implementation phase of redistricting, the sheer number of bills they proposed regarding redistricting suggests that at least some Howard County Delegates had the political will to influence the policy process. Like Howard County Councilmembers, however, these policy actors demonstrated the political

will to influence *future* redistricting efforts, rather than the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. The potential changes to redistricting processes that stemmed from these bills could have not only limited school boards' power over redistricting, but also changed the politics of it. For instance, if the state had greater control over redistricting, community members might direct their influence efforts toward state legislators, rather than or in addition to board members.

The Implemented Redistricting Plan

The school attendance boundaries associated with the redistricting plan that the Howard County Board of Education voted to enact in November 2019 were implemented in Fall 2020. At the time, the school district was still using virtual, rather than in-person, instruction. Thus, redistricted students did not have the opportunity to attend their new schools in person until spring 2021, when the district implemented a hybrid instruction model, or in fall 2021, when HCPSS schools opened fully.

Between the time the school board voted to enact their redistricting plan and the time the district implemented new school attendance boundaries, HCPSS families had the opportunity to file for exemptions from redistricting and to choose schooling options outside of HCPSS—which, as described earlier in this chapter, some families opted to do. Given these exemptions and exit options, not all students who were *proposed* to be redistricted in the enacted plan were necessarily redistricted upon implementation. Consequently, the school segregation rates associated with the implemented plan were likely to vary at least somewhat from the projected segregation rates associated with the enacted plan. As discussed in the following section, segregation rates associated with the implemented plan did, indeed, vary quite drastically from the enacted plan's projections.

Prospects for Reducing Segregation under the Implemented Plan

For the most part, the implemented redistricting plan was associated with lower racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation rates than existed in 2019. Racial/ethnic segregation rates (Figure 13; Appendix E), as measured by the *H* index, were lower under the implemented plan for both elementary and middle school levels and very slightly higher for the high school level. In other words, the implemented plan appeared to more evenly distribute Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White elementary and middle school students across schools. The largest difference was at the elementary school level, which decreased from 0.14 in 2019 to 0.12 under the implemented plan. Racial/ethnic segregation at both the elementary and middle school levels remained within the moderate range (0.10-0.25), while racial/ethnic segregation at the high school level remained within the low range (below 0.10).

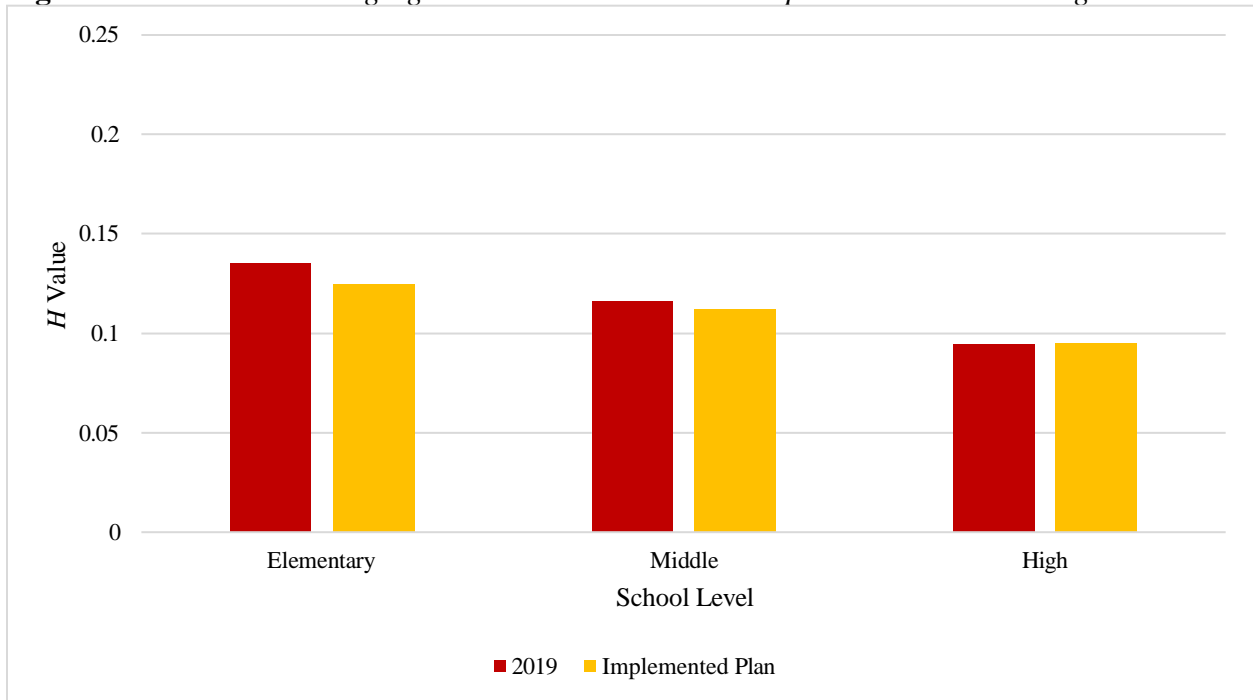
Racial/ethnic segregation rates associated with the implemented plan also varied from projections associated with Superintendent Martirano's recommendation and the school board's enacted plan. Rates associated with the implemented plan were lower than the superintendent's plan at the elementary school level and slightly higher at the middle and high school levels. In contrast, rates associated with the implemented plan were higher than the board's plan at the elementary school level and slightly lower at the middle and high school levels. The fact that racial/ethnic segregation rates associated with the implemented plan were lower than the superintendent's plan at the elementary school level is surprising, given that the superintendent prioritized desegregation in his recommendation and the board's enacted plan—which was the basis for the implemented boundaries—did not prioritize desegregation to the same degree.

Results for racial/ethnic segregation from the interaction index (Appendix G) showed that—relative to the 2019 boundaries, the proposed plans, and the board's enacted plans, and across all school levels—Asian, Black, and Hispanic students were exposed to White students at

lower rates, and White students were exposed to Asian, Black, and Hispanic students at higher rates. Differences in exposure rates generally fell within two percentage points. These results point to the importance of using both H and the interaction index to gauge desegregation prospects under various redistricting plans. While H indicated *decreased* racial/ethnic segregation under the implemented boundaries, exposure index results indicated *increased* racial/ethnic segregation. When contextualizing these results in the politics of the implementation phase, the directions of changes in exposure between racial/ethnic groups make sense. HCPSS had fewer White students in 2020 than in 2019. Consequently, in 2020, Asian, Black, and Hispanic students had fewer White peers to which they could be exposed, and White students had relatively more Asian, Black, and Hispanic students to which they could be exposed. Overall, these findings suggest that the implemented redistricting plan *appeared* to advance desegregation merely because the proportions of students in various racial/ethnic groups in HCPSS changed between 2019 and 2020.

More variation existed between redistricting plans for socioeconomic segregation (Figure 14; Appendix F). In terms of the distribution of FRPM and non-FRPM students, the implemented plans appeared to reduce segregation at all school levels. This change was most drastic at the elementary school level, which decreased from 0.19 in 2019 to 0.15 under the new attendance boundaries. Even with these changes, segregation would have remained moderate at elementary, middle, and high school levels. However, the decrease at the elementary school level brought socioeconomic segregation closer to the middle of the moderate range, and the decrease at the high school level brought socioeconomic segregation to just above the high end of the low range. Ultimately, these results suggest that the school attendance boundaries under the implemented

Figure 13. Racial/Ethnic Segregation Associated with the Implemented Redistricting Plan



Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

redistricting plan distributed students who received and did not receive FRPM more evenly across the district.

Socioeconomic segregation associated with the implemented plan was also consistently lower than all proposed plans (except for the Feasibility Study options) at the elementary and high school levels and most proposed plans at the middle school level. For example, at the elementary school level, the implemented boundaries were associated with a socioeconomic segregation rate of 0.15, while the superintendent’s plan, which prioritized socioeconomic desegregation, projected a segregation rate of 0.17. Again, this finding is surprising given that the implemented plan was based on the board’s enacted plan, which placed less emphasis on desegregating schools than did the superintendent’s plan.

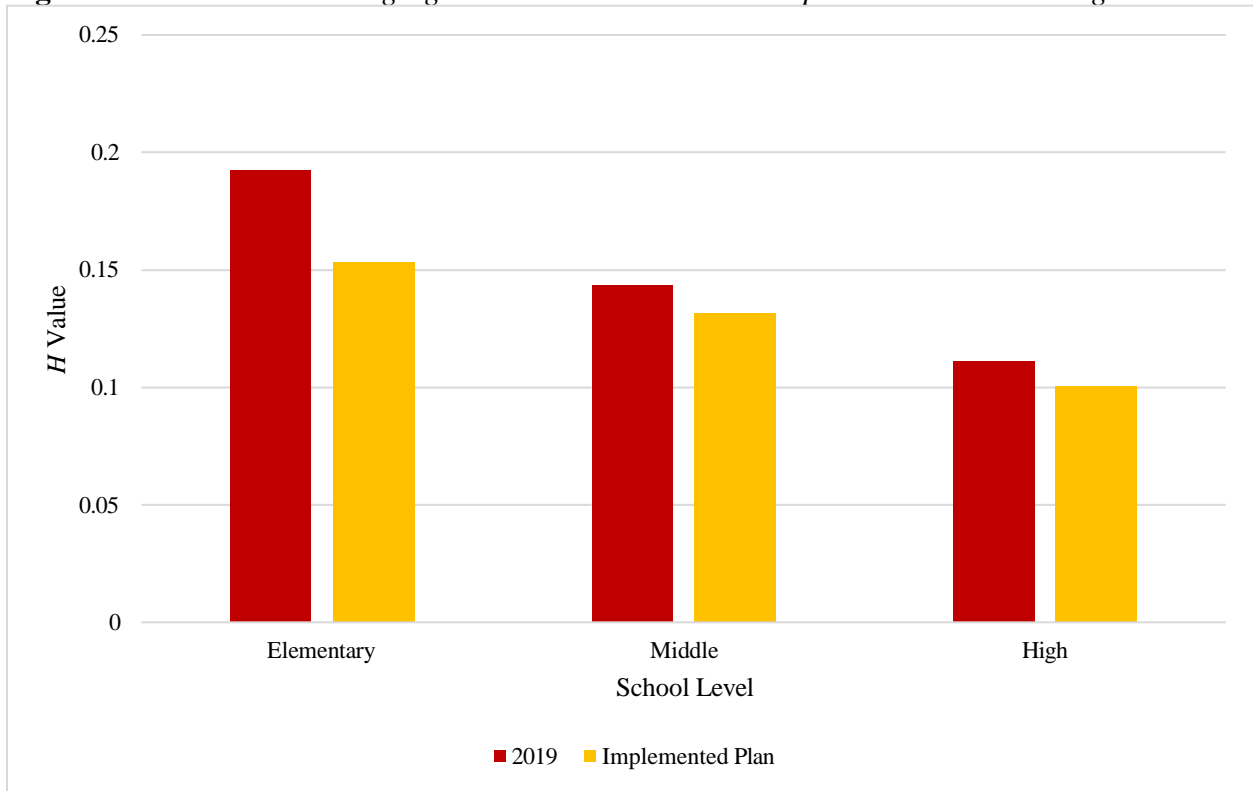
Results from the interaction index (Appendix H) showed similar patterns. Relative to 2019 boundaries, the implemented plan was associated with relatively large increases in FPRM

students' exposure to non-FRPM students, particularly at the elementary school level. For example, in 2019, the average FRPM student attended a school where roughly 63% of students did not receive FRPM; under the new attendance boundaries, that number increased to 67%. However, given that non-FRPM students comprised roughly 79% of elementary school students in 2020, FRPM students were still under-exposed to non-FRPM students under the implemented plan. Relative to other proposed redistricting plans, the implemented plan was associated with higher exposure of FRPM students to non-FRPM students at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Like results for racial/ethnic segregation, these findings may seem encouraging. However, they are likely the result of changes in the proportions of FRPM and non-FRPM students in the district, rather than the implemented boundaries themselves. Given that HCPSS had fewer FRPM students in 2020 than in 2019, it is unsurprising that FRPM students were exposed to non-FRPM students at higher rates. With fewer FRPM students in the district in 2020, one might also expect non-FRPM students' exposure to FRPM students to have decreased from 2019. Although the changes in non-FRPM students' exposure to FRPM students between 2019 and 2020 is small, for the most part, the direction of these changes support the conclusion that reduced socioeconomic segregation under the implemented boundaries resulted in large part from changes in the proportions of FRPM and non-FPRM students in HCPSS.

Chapter Summary: Gauging Influence in the Implementation Phase

I gauged actors' influence during the implementation phase of the redistricting process by assessing the degree to which their policy goals aligned with the segregation rates associated with the implemented plan, assessing their sources of power, assessing other actors' perceptions of their power, and identifying instances where actors were excluded from the redistricting process. Overall, district officials appeared to have the most influence of any actors over

Figure 14. Socioeconomic Segregation Associated with the Implemented Redistricting Plan



Note: Data are from the National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data.

redistricting in the implementation phase, largely because they were responsible for implemented the new school attendance boundaries. Community members who opted to leave HCPSS for private school, whether as a result of redistricting or the COVID-19 pandemic, also appeared to exert some influence during this phase of the policy process. While Howard County Council members and Howard County Delegates were involved in the implementation phase, their efforts focused on influencing *future* redistricting processes, rather than the 2019-2020 redistricting process.

Alignment between Policy Goals and Potential Outcomes

Given that both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation rates were lower under the implemented plan than in 2019, it appears that policy actors who favored desegregation exerted the most influence during the implementation phase of the policy process. However, qualitative

data suggested that most of those actors—who included Superintendent Martirano, a few board members, and a relatively small group of community members—were not highly involved during this phase. Thus, it is perhaps more likely that other factors affected the drop in segregation under the implemented plan. One of the most plausible explanations is the change in student enrollment in HCPSS between 2019 and 2020. Whether families left HCPSS for private school, homeschooling, or another county, or whether they simply opted not to sign up to receive FRPM, their decisions changed the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic distribution of students in the district. Because both H and interaction indices are based on the proportions of students in particular groups, it is therefore likely that such changes in student enrollment was at least partially responsible for the relatively low segregation rates associated with the implemented plan. For example, a decrease in the number of students receiving FRPM likely increased that group's rate of exposure to non-FRPM students, simply because there were proportionately more non-FRPM students in HCPSS in 2020 than in 2019.

Sources of Power

Several policy actors possessed sources of power to influence the redistricting process during the implementation phase. Families who had the financial resources to leave the district were perhaps the most influential of all community members, given that they could circumvent the new attendance boundaries while others were trying to fight to prevent them from being implemented. Additionally, state legislators possessed the power to introduce and enact legislation pertaining to redistricting in Howard County. However, as previously noted, they used this legislation to potentially influence future redistricting efforts, rather than to oppose or support the implementation of the 2019-2020 school attendance boundaries. Ultimately, though, school district officials seemed to possess the most power to influence the redistricting process

during the implementation phase because they were responsible for implementing the new attendance boundaries. For example, they controlled communication with redistricted students and their families, as well as schools to which students would be redistricted. District officials, including the superintendent, also quickly rejected some community members' and board members' requests that HCPSS would delay implementing the new attendance boundaries until Fall 2021.

Other Actors' Perceptions of Influence

Little evidence addressed how actors perceived other actors' influence during the implementation phase. However, given the surprising barrage of state legislation proposed—which generally aimed to redirect some power over the redistricting process from the school board to the state—and given that some community members wrote to their state representatives to express frustration with the redistricting process—it seems likely that those community members perceived that their state representatives *could* influence redistricting during the implementation phase.

Exclusion of Actors

Likewise, little evidence directly addressed whether and which actors were excluded from participating in the implementation phase of redistricting. To be sure, many groups of actors seemed to be inactive, or at least less active, during the implementation phase than during the initiation and enactment phases. For example, many fewer community members submitted written testimony to the board during the implementation phase than during other phases. However, given the new contextual factor that affected this phase—the COVID-19 pandemic—it is unclear whether these and other policy actors were excluded from the policy process, or whether they merely chose not to participate.

Chapter 9: Outcomes of the Redistricting Process

The attendance boundaries implemented in Fall 2020 led to various educational and political outcomes other than reducing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Whereas the redistricting policy's *prospects* address its potential to fulfill its aims, its *outcomes* refer to the policy's effects after it has been implemented. This chapter discusses the outcomes of the 2019-2020 redistricting effort in Howard County, including how this effort both resolved and created new problems for the school district. While some interview participants believed that redistricting resulted in more diverse schooling environments for their children, others argued that it did nothing to advance equity and further marginalized some low-income students. The contentious redistricting policy process also led to changes in the composition of the Howard County Board of Education and contributed to political polarization and partisan division in the county. Ultimately, the 2019-2020 redistricting effort appeared to decrease the political will of HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano and school board members to propose and advance large-scale redistricting plans that have the potential to reduce segregation.

A Successful Attempt to Diversify Schools

Several White parents and one Asian parent whom I interviewed whose children were redistricted from schools with fewer Black, Hispanic, and low-income students to schools with more Black, Hispanic, and low-income students suggested that their children benefitted from redistricting by attending more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse schools. Two White parents whose children were redistricted from Pointers Run Elementary School—which was predominantly White and Asian and had an FRPM rate of 4% in 2019—to Swansfield Elementary School—which was predominantly Black and Hispanic and had an FRPM rate of 55% in 2019—were particularly positive. For example, one White parent said of Swansfield:

I definitely feel like the diversity is great. My daughter went from Pointers where everybody is White or Indian or Asian and went to Swansfield where kids were more a mixture of African American and a lot of mixed races.

Likewise, another White parent, whose son was White and Indian, explained how he quickly realized how much more diverse Swansfield was than Pointers Run:

From the beginning, I think he [my son] realized, like, “Wow, this is a different world [from Pointers Run].” I think in a lot of ways, it was really great for him. The school is largely ... Black, but a lot of people from Africa, a lot of recent immigrants, refugees. Definitely a much broader sociodemographic.

This parent also described how Swansfield's diversity was evident at the school's “International Night.” She explained:

I'll tell you what, International Night was so amazing because there were so many countries represented. ... Over 50 countries. It was such a rich, beautiful, diverse place. ... Even people that didn't have a lot were sharing about their culture and brought in food.

As a result, this parent believed that her son was more comfortable being in diverse environments. In her words, he was “definitely more worldly than he used to be” and “can hang in any circle now where he's appeared since then [being redistricted to Swansfield] and he knows how to handle himself.” She also suggested that being redistricted to Swansfield helped her son gain a deeper understanding of how poverty existed and affected his peers in Howard County:

They [students at Swansfield] had some lunch bunches with the counselor and they're like, “What stresses you out?” Some of the stories these kids would tell, my son would be

like, "My parents don't get me a phone and they limit my screen time." One girl, I remember the very first one, because I was working in the other room, she's like, "Oh, my mom and my sister got in this fight and my sister threw something and she left the house and we've never seen her again after that." My son's like, "Holy crap" ... realizing how lucky he is kind of thing. I think that that is what they [board members and the superintendent] wanted to achieve [with redistricting].

After attending Swansfield for elementary school, this interview participant's son attended Clarksville Middle School, which more closely resembled Pointers Run, given that it was predominantly White and Asian and served few low-income students. This participant shared that, upon returning to a school in western Howard County, her son said, "Wow, it's so weird to be back here. There's no diversity. ... There are no Black people here, Mom, and everybody's rich." Ultimately, because her son gained the experience of attending a more racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse school through redistricting, this parent thought that "some of the goals [of redistricting] were met."

Likewise, an Asian parent whose daughter was redistricted from Howard High School—which was almost 50% White and had an FRPM rate of 11% in 2019—to Long Reach High School—which was predominantly Black and Hispanic and had an FRPM rate of 33% in 2019—described how she benefitted from being in a more diverse school. For example, she explained how the diversity at Long Reach would prepare her daughter to work in a diverse workplace later in life. In her words, "It [Long Reach] is more socioeconomically diverse [than Howard], which is so important. Getting to understand different people's struggles because that's what you're going to face as a manager in the workplace, different people and their issues." This parent also described how Long Reach was a better fit for her daughter than Howard because she was a

student of Color. More specifically, she discussed how her son, who had graduated from Howard, wanted his sister to be redistricted to Long Reach because “he experienced a lot of racism at Howard. ... He already knew that the environment at the majority-minority schools was much better for Brown people than Howard. He was very in favor [of his sister attending Long Reach].” Consequently, this participant’s family believed that sending their daughter to Long Reach would “be a much better experience for her;” she added, “It really has turned out to be that way.”

A Failed Attempt to Advance Equity

Although several parents believed that their children benefitted from redistricting by attending more diverse schools, and the implemented redistricting plan was generally associated with reduced racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, several parents whom I interviewed—including those whose children were redistricted—did not believe that redistricting improved educational equity. For example, when I asked one White parent from Oakland Mills who had advocated for HCPSS to desegregate and supported Superintendent Michael Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan whether he thought the implemented plan desegregated schools, he simply said, “No.” He further added, “As radical as people thought what the superintendent was doing [with his redistricting proposal] would be, you’d really have to do something a whole lot more radical if you really wanted to redistribute and truly balance the schools.” Another White parent, who did not support redistricting for desegregation, and whose child was redistricted from a predominantly White and Asian school to a predominantly Black and low-income school, agreed that the implemented redistricting plan did not advance equity. She explained, “I don’t think that the whole redistricting for socioeconomic [equity] worked. ... They were trying to balance FARMs [Free and Reduced Meal] numbers between schools, which I

don't feel really happened." This parent also argued that shifting schools' student populations did not—and would not—advance educational equity: "You just moved one group to one school and one group to another school. ... I don't know that that fixed anything." Her argument was reminiscent of the enactment phase of the redistricting process, where other community members who opposed the superintendent's plan—particularly Asian parents from River Hill—claimed that providing more resources to low-income schools was more likely to advance equity than was desegregating schools by socioeconomic status.

Similarly, two White parents whose children were redistricted from Pointers Run Elementary School to Swansfield Elementary School claimed that moving wealthier students to Swansfield *reduced* the number of resources available to low-income students. Swansfield was a Title I school, meaning that it received federal funding to help support low-income students. One White parent whose child was redistricted from Pointers Run to Swansfield said that, because of the school's Title I status, all students, regardless of income, received an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to pay for meals. This parent thought providing EBT cards to the wealthier families from Pointers Run was a waste of resources. In her words, "You've got families that don't need the money getting the money." Another White parent whose child was redistricted from Pointers Run to Swansfield also perceived that her accepting money to pay for her child's meals was taking away resources from the low-income students who needed them. She explained, "My kids even got these meal cards and all this stuff for going to that school [Swansfield]. We actually wanted to donate it back and they were like, "Oh, no." This parent also claimed that Swansfield was losing its status as a Title I school because the redistricting plan moved some Pointers Run families into it. She said, "It's horrible [that Swansfield is losing its Title I status] because ... there's a lot of kids still in that school that really need that [financial

support] and are not going to get it, just because they moved, like, one neighborhood of people. It breaks my heart to think that.” But while both of these parents thought their neighborhood’s transition to Swansfield took away resources that had previously been available to low-income students, no evidence from the district suggested that this was the case; in 2022, two years after the district implemented its new attendance boundaries, Swansfield was still designated a Title I school.

A few parents argued that redistricting failed to improve educational equity because it would not change housing patterns, which were the source of racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation and the inequities that stemmed from it. These parents’ arguments suggested that residential segregation would always constrain HCPSS’s ability to reduce segregation in its schools. One White parent from ElkrIDGE who had advocated for redistricting to address capacity issues in HCPSS argued that, “Even if they did a lot of this busing [to desegregate schools], it’s not going to fix the problem because of the way our housing is and the way it’s concentrated.” In her view, the mixed-income housing options and social services in the eastern part of the county, where she lived, and in Columbia, meant that low-income families could live there, while they could not afford to live in the rural western part of the county with single family homes and no public transportation. A Black parent from the eastern part of the county agreed that redistricting did not and would not desegregate schools because the key to reducing segregation was making mixed-income housing available in all parts of the county. In her words:

I don’t think the redistricting can put a big change in the diversity makeup of a school. ...
I just don’t think it’s possible ... based on the housing. ... You’re not going to get a lot more diversity in who is in those areas [in western Howard County] if you don’t build the

same types of homes over there as you do over here [in eastern Howard County].

Redistricting is not going to do much.

Ultimately, while these parents were not opposed to desegregating schools, they believed that redistricting did not—and could not—reduce segregation, given that housing patterns were the source of the problem.

Other interview participants argued that redistricting did not advance educational equity because it harmed low-income students by moving them to schools where they were not supported or to which they had limited transportation access. Two parents claimed that the implemented redistricting plan negatively affected low-income students in the Oakland Mills neighborhood of Columbia. For example, one White parent from Oakland Mills described how the implemented plan moved low-income students from her child’s school, Stevens Forest Elementary School—a predominantly Black and Hispanic school that had a 58% FRPM rate in 2019—to Thunder Hill Elementary School—a racially/ethnically diverse school with an FRPM rate of 18% in 2019. This parent had vehemently advocated for a redistricting plan that would desegregate schools and that would reduce the FRPM rate at Stevens Forest, in particular, because she believed that Stevens Forest could not meet the needs of such a high percentage of low-income students. Yet, when the implemented plan did move some low-income students out of Stevens Forest, this parent said, “It felt shitty, you know. I felt like those kids were going to get screwed.” Although the FRPM rate at Stevens Forest had decreased, she believed that the low-income students who had been redistricted out of the school were not getting the support they needed at Thunder Hill. She and other interview participants were skeptical that low-income students were receiving the support they needed at Thunder Hill in part because, as another parent explained, Thunder Hill parents were “very resistant” to redistricting between their school

and Stevens Forest or Talbott Springs elementary schools—both of which were predominantly Black and Hispanic and had high FRPM rates.

This parent also described how the implemented redistricting plan moved low-income students between Stevens Forest and another school, Talbott Springs, which she called “a lateral move” because “the FARMs situation didn’t change.” She believed that school board members decided to move students between these two schools because they received resistance from wealthier communities, like Thunder Hill, who did not want to be redistricted. In other words, the board chose to move low-income students in lieu of moving wealthier students. It is possible that the board intended for this move to reduce overcrowding at Talbott Springs, which was projected to be at 123% capacity utilization in 2019, but that seems unlikely because the school was projected to be at 124% capacity utilization in 2020. Another Black parent from the southeastern part of the county said that her middle-class neighborhood, which was already contributing to socioeconomic diversity at her child’s school, was redistricted to reduce the FRPM rate at another school with a similar FRPM rate. She thought this move was pointless, because her neighborhood was “already at a school where it [socioeconomic diversity] was fairly well-balanced.” This parent thought that the board voted to redistrict her middle-class neighborhood “just so you didn’t move the neighborhoods that were the most organized because they had the most money, the most time to be involved.” She ultimately believed that, by moving middle-class families in lieu of wealthy families who did not want to be redistricted, the new attendance boundaries did “not mak[e] as big an impact as they would have made otherwise, had they stuck to his [the superintendent’s] plans.”

Similarly, parents argued that redistricting failed to advance equity because it moved low-income students who did could not easily acquire transportation to their new schools. For

example, one Black parent said that the redistricting plan “put more walkers on buses than there needed to be.” She argued that busing students who previously walked to school was problematic not only because it required additional buses, which were hard to get amidst a bus driver shortage, but because most students who walked to school were from low-income communities. In her view, these students “would probably benefit from being walkers to school as opposed to [being bused]. Maybe their families moved into these neighborhoods because they walk to school.” She further explained that busing these low-income students meant that “they miss out now on after-school activities because they probably don’t have anyone to pick them up because they’re on a bus now.” Another parent, who identified as White and whose child was redistricted to Bryant Woods Elementary School, which was predominantly Black and had a 42% FPRM in 2019, described how redistricting “has harmed kids” and “was not in the best interest of low-income students.” To illustrate, she explained how one parent shared that her child had missed the first two weeks of summer school because of transportation issues. In her words:

My son went to summer school this year. At our summer school meeting, this child’s parent was explaining, “You need to find me transportation to summer school. As you know, ... my son could not get to school for the first two weeks of the school year because we did not have transportation and we couldn’t figure out the buses.” The vice principal was like, “I know and we will have to do something to help you.” I know that this stuff is happening because they do not have a car. There is no bus from our neighborhood over to Bryant Woods, and so they could not get their child to school, and they also had a new baby and a whole bunch of kids. If you have a whole bunch of kids, you can’t pile everybody on the bus to get your one child on the bus over to one school.

This outcome—that the implemented plan redistricted low- and middle-income families when they should not have—is perhaps unsurprising, given that low-income and racially/ethnically minoritized students have often endured the heaviest burdens of desegregation policies, like being transported to schools farther from their homes at higher rates (e.g., Horsford & McKenzie, 2008; Serbulo, 2019). Furthermore, while Superintendent Martirano explained that he tried to limit moving low-income students in his redistricting plan, the school board—which had the final say on what attendance boundaries to enact—made no such promises.

Despite these parents' claim that redistricting did not support or unfairly burdened low-income students, none of them identified as low-income. Thus, they themselves did not experience the lack of support for or burdens on low-income families that they argued resulted from redistricting. Furthermore, I found no other evidence that redistricting had these effects on low-income families. Consequently, it is possible that parents made these arguments in an effort to legitimize their opposition to redistricting—more specifically, to make their opposition appear rooted in a commitment to socioeconomic equity. Yet, the parents who argued that redistricting did not advance educational equity came from both sides of the redistricting battle: several supported redistricting for desegregation, and several opposed it. Despite their different policy goals, these parents agreed that redistricting had undesirable outcomes for the students it aimed to support. This finding reflects the fact that the enacted redistricting plan, which was the basis of the new attendance boundaries, was a compromise among actors with competing interests. Thus, it is unsurprising that the redistricting plan satisfied no policy actors fully. As one interview participant put it, “At the end, both sides were not happy.”

Insofar as Howard County parents perceived that redistricting both increased school diversity *and* failed to advance educational equity, it may seem that they misperceived the

meaning of equity. Yet, *diversity* and *equity* are distinct outcomes. For example, schools that are racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse have sometimes failed to provide equitable educational opportunities to students by tracking minoritized and low-income students into less rigorous classes (e.g., Oakes, 2005; Wells & Serna, 1996). Furthermore, Black students who attended more diverse schools after desegregation efforts in the 1970s often experienced racism from their White peers and teachers (e.g., Horsford, 2010; Wells et al., 2005). Parents who suggested that redistricting benefitted their children by sending them to more diverse schools were White or Asian, and were not low-income. Consequently, they may have been less likely to experience or observe where Black, Hispanic, and low-income students were being treated inequitably in those schools, despite their diversity. And while increased school diversity is certainly one aspect of desegregation, it is distinct from the policy’s ultimate goal of ensuring that all students have equitable access to educational opportunities and resources. Thus, these interview data provide just one part of the larger picture of how redistricting affected equity in HCPSS schools.

The 2020 School Board Election

In addition to outcomes related to diversity and equity in HCPSS schools, interview and documentary data suggest that the 2019-2020 redistricting process affected the 2020 Howard County Board of Education elections, mostly by replacing the school board’s slight *progressive* majority with a slight *conservative* one. The 2020 school board election was the first year that district-specific voting went into effect, in which members of the board were to be elected by constituents in each of the county’s five councilmanic districts, with only two elected at-large. The two board members who had received the most votes in the 2018 at-large election—Vicky Cutroneo and Chao Wu, the relatively conservative members of the board—had secured a four-

year term and did not have to run for re-election in 2020 (Meyer, 2020b). But the five district-specific school board positions were open game. Three of the board's five members whose terms had ended chose to run again in 2020: Christina Delmont-Small, a conservative board member who was a vocal opponent of redistricting and had voted against all attendance boundary adjustments; Kirsten Coombs, a more progressive board member who had voted for most boundary adjustments and was the source of much frustration for community members, given her last-minute decision to vote against redistricting part of the Clemens Crossing neighborhood, which resulted in an Open Meetings Act violation; and Jen Mallo, a progressive board member whose proposed redistricting plan served as the basis for the board's enacted plan.

Seventeen total candidates ran in the primary elections for the five districts—a slight increase from the 13 candidates who had run in the primary for one of four at-large seats in 2018. Christina Delmont-Small ran for a seat in District 1, a predominantly White and Asian district that covers northern and eastern parts of the county. She had one challenger: Matthew Molyett, whose campaign focused on equity through closing opportunity gaps and school discipline disparities, and providing additional mental health supports for marginalized students—especially those who identified as LGBTQ (The Baltimore Sun, 2020f). Additionally—and perhaps more significantly for the election—Molyett expressed continued support for “equitable redistricting to address both overcrowding and the existing socioeconomic and racial segregation in Howard County schools” (Meyer, 2020h).

Board members Kirsten Coombs and Jen Mallo both ran in a crowded race for District 4, a predominantly White and Asian district that covers parts of Columbia—including both River Hill and Wilde Lake, the two villages at the center of opposition to Superintendent Michael Martirano's plan—as well as parts of Clarksville in western Howard County. Six candidates,

including Coombs and Mallo, ran in the District 4 primary election—the most of any district—and one additional candidate entered as a write-in in the general election. These District 4 candidates accounted for more than a third of candidates running in the district primaries. While there was no available information about two of the candidates’ campaign platforms or views on redistricting, three of them—Sezin Palmer, Matt Levine, and Julie Hotopp—had publicly opposed redistricting for desegregation. During the race, Sezin Palmer, a Columbia resident, described the school board’s “misguided attempts to achieve equity by shuffling over 5,000 children to different schools” (Meyer, 2020f). Although Palmer supported redistricting when necessary to alleviate overcrowding, “increasing diversity across our schools and infusing additional resources into the schools that need them most.” However, she continued, “redistricting is not the best means by which to achieve either” (Meyer, 2020f). When explaining her position on redistricting, Palmer cited several arguments that opponents of the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan and the school board’s enacted plan had used, including that redistricting could not achieve equity and that it would hurt, not help, low-income students by busing them to schools where they would no longer be able to participate in after-school activities. She also stated that she did not support renewing Superintendent Martirano’s contract, which ended in June 2020, in part because he “developed and pushed” a “politically-motivated [redistricting] plan” (Baltimore Sun, 2020c). Ultimately, Palmer was endorsed by Howard County Families for Education Improvement (FEI)—the coalition that organized in opposition to the superintendent’s plan. In its endorsement of Palmer, FEI noted that she was a “child of immigrants,” like many Asian Howard County community members—particularly those from River Hill—who were a part of FEI or who shared their opposition to most of the proposed redistricting plans (FEI, 2020b).

District 4 candidates Matt Levine, a white man, and Julie Hotopp, a white woman, also opposed redistricting for desegregation and indicated that they were running, in part, because the 2019-2020 redistricting process was such a mess. Levine, a River Hill resident, indicated that Superintendent Martirano “lost a lot of the trust of the community with redistricting” because Attendance Area Committee did not reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of the community. Furthermore, he argued that “the entire redistricting process was divisive and hurtful and did not reflect the generosity and diversity of our wonderful county” (Baltimore Sun, 2020b). Likewise, Hotopp, a write-in candidate in the general election, argued that “the redistricting process was significantly flawed” (Meyer, 2020f). She further noted that, “With respect to equity-based redistricting, I prefer resources to be spent on education and school buildings in an equity-informed manner” (Meyer, 2020f). Like many opponents of redistricting had done throughout the policy process, Hotopp used the word “equity” frequently but without clarity. Yet, it appeared that, like Sezin Palmer, Hotopp believed in the “Improve Don’t Move” approach to education policy: in short, providing resources to under-resourced schools and making no effort to diversify them.

The board races in Districts 2, 3, and 5 were much less crowded than in District 4. In District 2, a diverse district on the eastern side of the county, three candidates entered the primary: Antonia Watts, a Black woman from Elkridge who supported “using redistricting to balance capacity but also to balance opportunities and further the goals of educational equity” (Meyer, 2020j); James Cecil, a White man from Elkridge who wanted to address achievement gaps within HCPSS and argued that “redistricting shined a bright light on the inequities within our school system” (Baltimore Sun, 2020d); and Larry Pretlow, a Black man from Oakland Mills who also wanted to “close the achievement gap by catering access to classroom resources” and

“community-based programs” (HoCo Watchdogs, 2020) but preferred to build new and renovate old schools rather than redistrict. Pretlow further indicated that he did not support renewing Superintendent Martirano’s contract because the superintendent led “a highly controversial and divisive redistricting process that did not follow the Board of Education’s policies” (Baltimore Sun, 2020a).

District 3, a diverse district that covered parts of Columbia and southeastern Howard County, also had three candidates in the primary election: Jolene Mosley, Tom Heffner, and Gian Alfeo. Mosley, a White woman from Columbia, did not discuss redistricting for desegregation in her campaign, and instead focused on how she would improve the redistricting *process*—which had upset community members on both sides of the issue. For example, Mosley said that she would like to implement changes to how the board acquired and used the data they considered when developing a redistricting plan, and wanted to increase opportunities to incorporate public input throughout the process (Meyer, 2020i). Heffner, a White man from Laurel, spoke little of redistricting during his campaign, but appeared to have opposed the 2019-2020 plan because he said the superintendent “showed zero leadership” and did not “take the time to listen to the community he was impacting” (Baltimore Sun, 2020e). Alfeo withdrew from the race, after his name had already been printed on the primary ballots, when he faced criticism for offensive social media posts that he had shared years earlier (Meyer, 2020a).

The primary in District 5, a predominantly White district that included rural western Howard County, had four candidates. Yun Lu, an Asian woman from Clarksville, said that she decided to run for board because of the 2019-2020 redistricting process. She explained, “I never imagined that I would run for any office until I saw the decision-making process ... during redistricting—inaccurate data, flawed analysis and misinterpreted results” (Meyer, 2020g). Lu

also made clear that she did not support redistricting for desegregation. For example, she indicated, “I support equity, but I don’t support unnecessarily moving students. Capacity should be the top priority for redistricting” (Meyer, 2020g). Given that Lu’s positions aligned with those of many opponents of redistricting from western Howard County, including many Asian residents, it is unsurprising that she received an endorsement from FEI, the Indian Origin Network of Howard County, and the Chinese American Parent Association Political Action Committee. The remaining three candidates were Cindy Vaillancourt, Gene Ryan, and Saif Rehman. Although little public information was available about Ryan and Rehman, Vaillancourt, a White woman from Ellicott City, was vocal about her opposition to redistricting for desegregation. Vaillancourt was a board member from 2010-2018, and while she chose not to run in 2018, it appeared that the 2019-2020 redistricting process motivated her to run for a third term. During her campaign, she explained that “the 2019 redistricting process was unnecessarily divisive and ultimately ineffective” (Meyer, 2020g). She also expressed support for “neighborhood schools” and said that she opposed using redistricting to desegregate schools, or, in her words, “constantly adjusting attendance areas in order to achieve arbitrarily determined demographic balances” (Meyer, 2020g).

The perceived flaws of the redistricting process seemed to galvanize several Howard County community members to run for a school board seat in 2020, especially in Districts 4 and 5, which included River Hill and other parts of western Howard County, which had opposed the redistricting plans. Likewise, evidence suggests that the redistricting process *dissuaded* the two board members who were most supportive of redistricting for desegregation—Chair Mavis Ellis and Sabina Taj—from running for re-election. Several interview participants suggested that both Ellis and Taj chose not to run in 2020 because of the “nastiness” and “harassment” they

experienced during the redistricting process. These participants also suggested that Ellis and Taj were, in one parent's words, "enemy number one" for opponents of redistricting, not only because they supported desegregation but also "because they were women of Color." For example, one parent said that Taj "had people show up at her house" because they disagreed with her views on redistricting. Likewise, another parent recalled how board members "needed police escorts to leave the building at the Board of Education so they wouldn't be harassed on their way out [of meetings]." As one parent put it, Mavis [Ellis] and Sabina [Taj] were like, "Hell no, why would we do that [run for re-election? Hell no, we're done." Similarly, an elected official said, "The women of Color on the board were like, 'Fuck this.' Sabina [Taj] and Mavis [Ellis] did not run again ... in large part because of their experiences."

Redistricting also appeared to increase some community members' engagement in school board elections, even if they were not keen to run for office. For example, the Chinese American Parent Association donated over \$12,000 to the campaigns of Christina Delmont-Small, Sezin Palmer, and Yun Lu—all of whom opposed redistricting for desegregation (Dommu, 2020). Likewise, FEI became involved in the 2020 board election by endorsing Delmont-Small, Palmer, and Lu, and recommending that supporters donate to their campaigns. But community engagement in the election did not seem to increase writ large: while groups who had vehemently opposed redistricting for desegregation—and the plans that claimed to advance it—became more involved, voter turnout in the 2020 Howard County Board of Education election was a mere 40% of voter turnout in the 2018 election. While it is impossible to say exactly what contributed to such dramatically lower turnout in 2020, several factors were likely at play. First, the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected many residents' interests in voting or capacity to vote. Second, the 2020 election was the first to be done at the district level, rather than the

county level. Only five seats were open, and community members did not have the option to vote for any at-large candidates, given that Chao Wu and Vicky Cutroneo had been deemed the at-large candidates after winning the largest shares of votes in the 2018 election. And third, the 2018 election was the first after community members rallied to convince the school board to fire the superintendent prior to Michael Martirano, Renee Foose. The board convinced Foose to retire in May 2017, but not before several months of turmoil, including Superintendent Foose’s decision to sue the board for trying to undermine her authority (Khan & Herring, 2017). Given that many community members were upset with how long it took the school board to “fire” Foose, voter turnout in the 2018 school board election may have been abnormally high. Even so, turnout in the 2016 board election (345,781) was closer to 2018 turnout rates (385,781) than to 2020 turnout rates (158,154). In sum, the low voter turnout in the 2020 school board election, relative to both 2016 and 2018 elections, may have been an indicator that the vast majority of Howard County community members had moved on from the contentious redistricting decision by election time, and that it was just a select few groups who carried the anti-redistricting torch into the new school year.

In the end, two incumbents and three new candidates were elected to the school board. Christina Delmont-Small won in District 1 with 64% of the vote, which suggested that most voters in some northern and eastern parts of Howard County may not have supported redistricting for desegregation, as her opponent did. In District 2, Antonia Watts won handily with 72% of the vote. She ran against Larry Pretlow in the general election, which meant that voters were deciding between someone who supported redistricting for desegregation (Watts) and someone who opposed it (Pretlow). Watts’ win suggested that most District 2 voters may have supported desegregation—an unsurprising finding, given that District 2 includes Oakland

Mills, where many advocates of Superintendent Martirano's recommended redistricting plan resided. In Districts 3, voters elected Jolene Mosley, who won 78% of the vote, and in District 5, Yun Lu won with 65% percent of the vote. Again, neither Mosley nor her opponent took clear stances on redistricting for desegregation, and both candidates in the District 5 race opposed redistricting for desegregation.

The District 4 election was perhaps the most contentious. Incumbent Jen Mallo won the largest share of votes in the primary (33%), but Sezin Palmer, who vehemently opposed redistricting for desegregation, was a close second (28%). Thus, Mallo and Palmer both edged out incumbent Kirsten Coombs. The general election in District 4 was a close one: Mallo won narrowly with 52% of the vote, while Palmer received 47% of the vote and write-in candidate Julie Hotopp received less than 1% of the vote. The close vote reflects the different constituent groups in District 4: in one part of the district lie River Hill and Clarksville, which quickly and effectively mobilized to oppose any redistricting plan that aimed to advance equity by desegregating schools, and in another part lie Wilde Lake, Harper's Choice, and other Columbia villages with higher percentages of Black families, who were more likely to support desegregation during the 2019-2020 redistricting effort. Still, Mallo's win was surprising to many interview participants because she had been the face of the board's enacted plan, which many community members on both sides of the redistricting issue opposed. One interview participant—an Oakland Mills parent—aptly thought that Mallo's re-election suggested how the *loudest* community members, who opposed the proposed and enacted redistricting plans, did not necessarily represent the *majority* of community members. In his words:

If you look at what the outcome was of the next sets of elections in Howard County, it probably showed that, yes, there were some very vocal people out there, but there was

probably a lot of people who were just, you know, quietly going about their business. And they were probably okay with what was happening [during redistricting], and they voted the people who supported this [redistricting for desegregation] back into office. The political composition of the board after the 2020 election largely aligned with this parent’s assessment that the majority of Howard County voters were not as opposed to redistricting for desegregation as were the loudest community members. In the end, the conservative members of the board in 2019—Christina Delmont-Small, Vicky Cutroneo, and Chao Wu—remained on the board. And while 2020 board candidates all ran as nonpartisan, District 5 winner Yun Lu seemed to add another conservative voice to the board, at least with regard to redistricting. On the other hand, there was turnover in the progressive bloc of the board: neither Mavis Ellis nor Sabina Taj, who were deemed by many interview participants the most “progressive” board members, ran for re-election, and Kirsten Coombs and Jen Mallo had to face off because they were both members of District 4. Jen Mallo returned as one of the board’s more progressive voices (at least in the eyes of several interview participants), and was joined by Antonia Watts, who publicly advocated for closing opportunity gaps and desegregating schools in her election campaign. The seventh board member, Jolene Mosley took no clear stance on redistricting during her campaign. Ultimately, then, the slight progressive majority that the school board had in 2019 seemed to be replaced by a slight conservative majority that was less inclined to use redistricting as a strategy to desegregate schools. Yet, changes to the composition of the board were not as dramatic as one might have expected given the contentious politics of the redistricting process—particularly, opponents’ threats to “vote out” candidates who voted in favor of redistricting.

Increasing Partisanship and Polarization

Interview data suggested that one of the most prominent outcomes of redistricting was increasing political polarization and partisanship in Howard County, which was evident in both the 2020 school board election and county politics more broadly. Although all candidates in the 2020 school board election officially ran as nonpartisans, interview participants across areas of the county and racial/ethnic identities suggesting that the race was more partisan than in previous years. Some participants said that board members campaigned with particular party affiliations. For example, one White parent from the Pointers Run neighborhood of River Hill explained how incumbent Jen Mallo, who supported redistricting for desegregation, campaigned as a Democrat:

The candidates are supposed to run as a nonpartisan candidate. In the 2020 election, Mallo was out there passing out pamphlets that had all the Democratic nominees on there with her name ... or her people [who campaigned for her] were basically like, "Here. Vote Democrat," as Mallo is passing you out this handout.

Another White parent, who lived in Oakland Mills, argued that Mallo's decision to campaign as a Democrat is what allowed her to beat incumbent Kirsten Coombs in the primary, because Coombs waivered in her position on redistricting, as evidenced by her back-and-forth vote on the Clemens Crossing boundary adjustment. In this parent's words, "Kirsten lost in that [primary] because Kirsten couldn't pick a side. ... That's what happens when you don't take a stand, when you don't know what you're for." Some interview participants also suggested that community members voted by assessing—or guessing—candidates' party affiliation. For example, one parent suggested that community members who opposed redistricting voted Republican, while those who supported it voted Democrat. She explained:

Those that are still hung up about redistricting favor more right-wing candidates, because they're the ones selling the neighborhood schools. ... If we go way back, which is 2018,

we had a huge field [in the school board election]. We had over 15 people that ran then. People like Christina [Delmont-Small] and Vicky [Cutroneo] could get away with being on the fence because that [partisan] narrative wasn't out there. Now, that narrative is out there and the candidates are not afraid to say ... who they're aligned with. Even though they [school board candidates] say it's a nonpartisan race, no politics in education, you can see along the political spectrum where those people lie. A person who is for the restriction of books, restriction of curriculum, you assume—whether they are or they're not—you assume they're racist or they'll go for racist policies. If you don't want that, you're not going to vote for them. In that way, the people who are for equity, you don't need to convince them. They know who they're voting for. There are very few people I've seen who say, "Oh, I haven't made up my mind who I'm voting for."

Many interview participants thought that increased partisanship in Howard County Board of Education elections was part of a broader "national trend" too. For example, a White parent who opposed redistricting for desegregation—and who sent her children to private school as a result of the 2019-2020 redistricting effort—believed that, with school board members' efforts to tackle big social issues like segregation through education policy, school board elections were bound to become more partisan. She explained:

I feel like by choosing these very large social issues that not everyone agrees with, that it is creating a very partisan election process. I do feel like it's [board elections] become very partisan. I think they [board members] are all going for all kinds of endorsements now and that never used to happen. I think there's a mix of them starting to convince the community that our schools are somehow inadequate and need this, and then on the other side, they're coming up against the exact opposite. I think they are getting people's

attention and I think there's a lot going on with big racial issues in the world right now and I feel like people are really feeling like, "How can we make reparations for this and fix it and all aspects of our society in life?" I think that definitely creates a political charge to the topics and the school boards they're electing.

Overall, these interview participants indicated that both school board candidates who were looking to gain votes and community members who were looking to place candidates in a political party contributed to increased partisanship in the 2020 school board election.

Interview participants disagreed on the benefits and detriments of increasingly partisan school board elections. One White parent, who had long been involved with Howard County politics, suggested that board elections *should* be partisan because knowing the party with which a candidate is registered would provide the public with more information about where they "stand" on policy issues. In fact, she had advocated for partisanship in prior board elections too, and she said that, after redistricting, many of her peers started to agree with her. In her words:

Nobody's complaining about partisanship now. Everybody's like, "You're right. You're right. It's partisan, and it should be partisan, and we should be voting on party lines."

Because nobody knows where these people [school board candidates] stand on anything.

... I was [in prior years], like, "It *is* partisan. Stop telling me it's nonpartisan." Education policy is partisan in every way possible.

Other parents thought partisanship detracted from the issues at hand, because community members were more concerned about candidates' party affiliation than their policy goals. For example, one parent explained:

Last time [in the 2018 school board election], you could have a conversation with people [about board candidates] and talk to them. Now, people are like, "Is the person a

Democrat or is the person a Republican?" ... They have their blinders on now. It's like, either or.

Likewise, a White parent shared:

In that race [the 2020 school board election], it was [Jen] Mallo against ... Sezin Palmer. I feel it was like, "Oh. Well, Sezin's a Republican and Mallo's a Democrat," and therefore people were like, "We're voting one versus the other," even though it wasn't supposed to be a partisan election. ... People are going to say things about one candidate versus the other that may or may not be true, but if somebody reads [about the party affiliation of] who they're going to [vote for], they're going to be like, "Oh, crazy Republican. They want to ban books." I feel it's just part of our society that people aren't putting the effort in to actually research [political candidates]. As a voting person, I feel you need to do your due diligence to look at what people stand for and vote based on if that's what you want in an elected official.

Parents were divided about the desirability of partisanship in school board elections. On one hand, they thought it gave voters a clearer idea of candidates' political interests and policy goals. On the other hand, they thought it reduced the elections to party affiliation and prohibited voters' substantive considerations of which candidates they should support and why.

In addition to increased partisanship in school board elections, interview participants cited increased political polarization in the county more generally. They believed that this polarization stemmed at least in part from the contentious, vitriolic nature of the redistricting process. For example, one parent who advocated for desegregation said, simply, "I think it [redistricting] has irreparably done major harm to our civility and elections in Howard County." Several interview participants indicated frustration that, after redistricting, progressive

community members were no longer willing to have substantive conversations with anyone they perceived to be conservative. These parents described how, regardless of their reason(s) for opposing redistricting, they were automatically branded racists by community members who supported it. Further, these parents thought that the quick-to-judge mentality of some progressives in the county prohibited meaningful conversations about redistricting and other policy issues. For instance, one White parent who identified as a liberal but opposed redistricting for desegregation explained how people called her racist because of her policy position, even though she believed she had legitimate reasons for opposing redistricting that were, in her view, not racist. In her words:

There's so much badmouthing. As much as the liberals would like to say that the conservatives are horrible bad mouthers, I would say that the liberal side is just as bad or worse in Howard County, with just saying awful things and attacking people instead of making arguments. I think there was a lot of that going on [during redistricting] and that didn't help. People can't have conversations. You can't have a meaningful conversation and I experienced it. I would experience it all the time. I can't tell you how many people have called me racist because I did not believe that the redistricting was right. They didn't understand. I didn't believe redistricting was right because I felt like we were already integrated and I think it's bad for the environment and like all these other ideals that I hold up, that they also say that claim that they have.

Similarly, another White parent who opposed redistricting for desegregation argued that the redistricting contributed to over-simplified caricatures of Democrats and Republicans in the county. She explained, "It's very much become Democrat versus Republican. All Republicans are racist and anti-gay, and all Democrats are pushing ... racial equality and making White

people need to be feeling inferior.” Ultimately, increased polarization and partisanship appear to have undermined at least some potential for deliberative democracy in Howard County. To be sure, increased partisanship and polarization are national trends (Houston, 2022; Prior, 2013)—as several interview participants suggested. But while one might expect national debates to surface at the local level, at least to some extent, it is nonetheless noteworthy that these debates have infiltrated Howard County, where the ideals of diversity and inclusion reign, and where residents are encouraged to “choose civility” (Urban Libraries Council, 2018).

Finding Power in Numbers

As Howard County became more politically divided in the wake of redistricting, some interview participants indicated that groups on both sides of the issue coalesced around shared interests and, subsequently, gained political power—a trend that other education scholars have documented as well (e.g., Laats, 2015; Nickerson, 2014). As one elected official explained, redistricting “helped people find their people, for better or for worse. ... It galvanized people in sort of whatever direction they were already leaning in. They, like, jumped to it.” For example, she described how opponents of redistricting created Howard County Families for Education Improvement; a Facebook group called Howard County Neighbors United; and HoCo Watchdogs, which this participant described as a “far-right blog.” Although community members created these groups in response to redistricting, they persist today. To illustrate, Howard County Neighbors United now has almost 9,000 members, many of whom post regularly about local, state, and national educational issues. HoCo Watchdogs has also remained active: they regularly write newsletters and blogs about redistricting and other ongoing school board and county council issues.

Although less prominent, progressive groups emerged from redistricting too. For example, one elected official described how community members founded the Howard Progressive Project, a grassroots community organization, in response to redistricting, but have continued to operate it since and have engaged in other policy issues as well. For instance, this elected official explained how the Howard Progressive Project advocated for progressive policies, like raising the minimum wage in the county, which the Howard County Council ultimately voted to do. Furthermore, another interview participant—a parent who advocated for desegregation—described how a small group of community members who shared her position on redistricting created a Facebook group where they share about recent happenings and upcoming events related to education and equity more broadly. She shared that this group of about 60 community members had recently rallied around progressive candidates in the 2022 school board election. These findings reflect those of a recent study of school redistricting in Richmond, Virginia, where a contentious policy process led community members who supported desegregation to form a grassroots coalition and further advocate for educational equity (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2017).

The most significant consequence of “help[ing] people find their people” is that, with greater numbers, groups tend to have greater political power, or potential to influence policy decisions. Indeed, several interview participants suggested that some of the aforementioned groups—particularly FEI—has used the momentum they gained during redistricting to advocate for spots on various school board committees. For example, as of 2022, FEI had acquired a seat on the school board’s Operating Budget Review Committee. As one parent explained, “That’s huge,” because having a “seat at that table” provides them an opportunity to advocate for or against particular school system expenditures. In other words, FEI now has a direct line of

communication to push for HCPSS to spend money where they want it to be spent. Another participant shared that an FEI representative had recently served as a moderator at a forum for Howard County Council primary races, which suggests that the group may be getting involved in politics outside of the education arena. While this evidence indicates that FEI has gained power as a player in Howard County politics, it also suggests that the political outcomes of redistricting have persisted long after 2020.

Changing Policy 6010

Following the 2019-2020 redistricting effort, the Howard County Board of Education modified Policy 6010, which provided guidance on the district’s school boundary review processes. One interview participant—a parent—said that she served on the committee that reviewed the policy. In her view, the school board initiated a review of Policy 6010 “because they’re like, ‘Well, this went really bad. Let’s take a look at Policy 6010 again, see if we can improve things.’” This parent said that one of the factors driving a review of Policy 6010 following redistricting was the Maryland State bill (HoCo 41-20) that called for the school board to hold public hearings for community members in polygons that were under consideration for redistricting but had not been considered in previously proposed plans. Indeed, the most recent version of Policy 6010, which the board approved in February 2022, specifies that, if a polygon is proposed for reassignment in a “board-approved Preliminary Attendance Area Adjustment Plan,” but was not proposed for reassignment in the superintendent’s proposed plan or a previous “board-approved” plan, the board will hold public hearings for that polygon (Howard County Public School System, 2022b).

Otherwise, Policy 6010 underwent few modifications. Most notably, the conditions that can initiate an attendance boundary review, including that school capacity utilization is beyond

the target range of 90-110%, remained largely unchanged, as did the three factors (capacity utilization, community stability, and school diversity) that the board and superintendent were to consider when developing proposed redistricting plans. While, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 redistricting process, some board members proposed assigning weights to each of those three criteria, they did not opt to do so in this updated version of the policy. Even so, the interview participant who sat on the policy review committee shared that the committee did discuss the possibility of assigning weights to the three factors, or at least ranking them. But, as she explained, the board was not required to implement the committee's recommendations—as they were not required to enact the superintendent's recommended redistricting plan. In her words, "What the committee says doesn't always end up going straight through [to being written in the policy]. It goes back through the sausage grinder."

Minimizing Future Redistricting Efforts

Ultimately, the contentious nature of the 2019-2020 redistricting process appeared to lessen Superintendent Martirano's and the Howard County Board of Education's political will to propose a large-scale redistricting plan that had the potential to reduce school segregation. In 2022, when I completed data collection for this study, the district was undergoing another redistricting effort in preparation for opening High School 13, which it was building in the southeastern part of the county. Like redistricting efforts prior to 2019, this effort focused on creating the attendance boundary for one school. All interview participants—including those who had left HCPSS for private school—were aware of the most recent redistricting effort, and thought it would stir up much of the same political controversy as the 2019-2020 effort. As one former AAC member put it, "It's like the sun. It's going to come back around." Yet, many of them indicated that this redistricting effort was *less* contentious than the one in 2019-2020

because the superintendent and school board had intentionally minimized its scope. For example, one Asian parent, whose daughter was redistricted from Howard High School to Long Reach High School in 2019, explained:

It hasn't gotten that bad this time, and the reason it's not that bad this time is that they so severely limited the redistricting rate. ... There were a whole bunch of schools that were off limits so you can't even come up with the optimal solution because you're not willing to look at the whole county.

In particular, she noted that River Hill and Wilde Lake—the two high schools at the center of opposition to the superintendent's recommendation in 2019—were “off limits.” This parent also suggested that Superintendent Martirano seemed unwilling to try to address segregation with this round of redistricting. She said that the superintendent worked with a consultant to develop four options, but did not intentionally prioritize advancing racial/ethnic or socioeconomic desegregation in any of them. In her words, “I think the superintendent was just like, “Okay, I'm throwing up these plans, A, B, C, and D. D is the one I want and I'm not going to kill myself for equity after last time.”” Another interview participant, who was an elected official, agreed:

I think he [the superintendent] is avoiding controversy [with his approach to redistricting in 2022]. He doesn't want to deal with it. ... It was really hard in 2019, and I think he wants to avoid all that. And those surveys that they send out, people said the closest school is the most important thing. [So he said,] “Okay, then we'll do that. If that's what people want, we'll do that.”

The parent whose daughter was redistricted from Howard to Long Reach even indicated that the school board considered moving her and several other students back to Howard; she vehemently opposed that move because she believed that redistricting some students from Howard to Long

Reach, which many families opposed and avoided, “helped equity.” Furthermore, the board was considering a redistricting plan that would open High School 13 at a high FRPM rate. In other words, the plan would do the complete opposite of what the superintendent and several board members had advocated for just a few years prior. The 2022 redistricting process also did not involve an Attendance Area Committee, which had provided feedback to Superintendent Martirano and had largely advocated for desegregation in 2019. As one parent put it, “This time, it’s all on the consultants. These [proposed redistricting plans] are what the consultants came up with.” Altogether, this evidence suggests that, during the 2022 redistricting process, district and school board policy actors were much less focused on advance educational equity by redistricting to reduce segregation than they were in 2019.

Chapter Summary

Overall, the 2019-2020 redistricting effort in HCPSS changed the educational and political context of the county in several ways. Many White and Asian parents who were redistricted argued that the policy improved schools’ diversity, which they valued. Yet, other parents believed that redistricting failed to advance educational equity by unfairly burdening low-income students. The policy also changed the distribution of power in Howard County by altering the composition of the school board—although it did not do so as much as one might have expected given redistricting opponents’ threats to not re-elect board members who voted in favor of redistricting—and by uniting community members on either side of the political spectrum. Some other observed outcomes of redistricting, including increased partisanship and changes to the policy that guides HCPSS’s attendance boundary adjustments, will likely have longer-term impacts for the county. Indeed, the scaled-back redistricting plans that HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano and the Howard County Board of Education were considering

in 2022 to create the attendance boundaries around the district's new high school suggest that the contentious political dynamics of the 2019-2020 redistricting may have mitigated these policy actors' will to redistrict comprehensively and with desegregation in mind.

Chapter 10: Significance

This chapter summarizes and discusses the significance of my findings on the politics and prospects of desegregating schools in Howard County, Maryland, by redistricting, or redrawing school attendance boundaries. In particular, I discuss what scholars and policymakers can learn from this “critical case” (Yin, 2018) of redistricting and its contributions to the literature on redistricting and school desegregation policies, as well as the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

The Politics and Prospects of Redistricting in Howard County, Maryland

This study sought to answer two research questions: 1) *How did political dynamics influence HCPSS’s attempt to redistrict in 2019-2020?*; and 2) *To what extent did political dynamics influence the redistricting plans’ effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS?* I used a qualitative-dominant, convergent parallel mixed methods design to gauge how political dynamics influenced the proposed, enacted, and implemented plans in HCPSS. Qualitative data, including documents, observations, and interviews, addressed the political dynamics of redistricting. In alignment with my conceptual framework, I explored contextual, systemic, and actor-level political factors that interacted throughout the policy process. While quantitative data served as a secondary source for assessing policy actors’ policy goals or interests, these data also addressed redistricting plans’ prospects for reducing segregation by measuring the extent to which each version of a redistricting plan was projected to—or actually did—reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS. I integrated qualitative and quantitative data to gauge whether and how the politics of redistricting influenced various plans’ potential to reduce segregation in HCPSS. Figures 15, 16, and 17 present the concepts from my framework where I use integrated data; qualitative and quantitative findings

related to those concepts; and “integrated findings,” or those derived from integrating qualitative and quantitative data.

I found that school overcrowding, growing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, and resource inequities led many community members and elected officials to criticize the school system, and, eventually, led HCPSS Superintendent Michael Martirano and the Howard County Board of Education to initiate redistricting in January 2019. Per HCPSS Policy 6010, which governed the board’s redistricting efforts, the board could only initiate redistricting under conditions related to school capacity. Thus, the board cited school overcrowding—rather segregation or educational inequities—as the impetus for redistricting.

Policy actors within the school system and school board proposed several redistricting policy alternatives, or versions of redrawn attendance boundaries, in the months that followed. First, in accordance with Policy 6010, HCPSS’s Office of School Planning (OSP) developed ten redistricting plans as a part of the annual Feasibility Study, which provided the superintendent, school board, and community with information about school capacity issues—such as overcrowding and under-enrollment—and boundary adjustments that focused on addressing them. The OSP claimed that their Feasibility Study plans prioritized school capacity issues rather than other factors outlined in Policy 6010, such as maintaining neighborhood schools or ensuring school diversity. Quantitative results suggested that prioritizing capacity came at a cost: the ten Feasibility Study plans were projected to increase racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, at worst, or at best to maintain it (Figure 15). Most notably, the Feasibility Study plans had the potential to increase socioeconomic segregation, as measured by Theil’s H , at the elementary school level—where it was highest—from 0.19 to 0.22, moving to the upper edge of the moderate range (0.10-0.25) (Reardon & Yun, 2003). An increase of 0.03 under one policy

Figure 15. Data Integration for the Initiation Phase of Redistricting

INITIATION PHASE				
Research Question	Concept	QUAL	Integrated Finding	quan
<p><i>How did political dynamics influence HCPSS's attempt to redistrict in 2019-2020?</i></p>	<p><u>Actors' Policy Goals</u></p> <p>HCPSS Office of School Planning (OSP)</p>	<p>Feasibility Study plans "focused on alleviating overcrowding" <i>Feasibility Study Report</i></p>	<p>OSP did not prioritize desegregation in their proposed plans</p>	<p>Projected changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.14-0.15 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.12 (middle), 0.09 to 0.10 (high)</p> <p>Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.22 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.16 (middle), 0.11 to 0.13-0.16 (high)</p>
	<p>Superintendent</p>	<p>"My whole life as an educator has been predicated on equity." <i>Superintendent</i></p>	<p>Superintendent prioritized desegregation in his recommended plan</p>	<p>Projected changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.13 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.10 (middle), 0.09 to 0.09 (high)</p> <p>Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.17 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.13 (middle), 0.11 to 0.12 (high)</p>
<p><i>To what extent did political dynamics influence the redistricting plans' effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS?</i></p>	<p><u>Prospects</u></p> <p>Feasibility Study plans</p>	<p>"While all Policy 6010 factors are considered [in the Feasibility Study plans], there is no one plan [that] can reconcile each school attendance area adjustment with all factors." <i>Feasibility Study Report</i></p>	<p>Prioritizing school capacity led to plans with potential to increase segregation</p>	<p>Projected changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.14-0.15 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.12 (middle), 0.09 to 0.10 (high)</p> <p>Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.22 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.16 (middle), 0.11 to 0.13-0.16 (high)</p>
	<p>Superintendent's recommended plan</p>	<p>"This work truly represents equity in action." <i>Superintendent</i></p> <p>"We [the Attendance Area Committee] were with a real focus on equity." <i>AAC member</i></p>	<p>Prioritizing desegregation led to a plan with potential to decrease segregation</p>	<p>Projected changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.13 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.10 (middle), 0.09 to 0.09 (high)</p> <p>Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.17 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.13 (middle), 0.11 to 0.12 (high)</p>

Figure 16. Data Integration for the Enactment Phase of Redistricting

ENACTMENT PHASE				
Research Question	Concept	QUAL	Integrated Finding	quan
<i>How did political dynamics influence HCPSS's attempt to redistrict in 2019-2020?</i>	<u>Actors' Policy Goals</u>			
	Board member Jen Mallo	"In order to reduce overcrowded schools, we will need a solution that includes ... redistricting." <i>Board member Mallo</i>	Mallo did not prioritize desegregation in her proposed plan	Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.20 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.15 (middle), 0.11 to 0.12 (high)
	Board member Chao Wu	"I don't want massive redistricting for our students." <i>Board member Wu</i>	Wu did not prioritize desegregation in his proposed plan	Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.20 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.15 (middle), 0.11 to 0.14 (high)
<i>To what extent did political dynamics influence the redistricting plans' effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS?</i>	<u>Prospects</u>			
	Mallo's plan	Proposed plan focused on addressing community feedback, minimizing travel time, and enhancing school diversity	Mallo's attempt to balance multiple priorities led to a plan with potential to increase segregation	Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.20 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.15 (middle), 0.11 to 0.12 (high)
	Wu's plan	Proposed plan focused on addressing community feedback and redistricting as few students as possible to minimize disruption to communities	Wu's prioritization of community input and minimizing disruption over desegregation led to a plan with potential to increase segregation	Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.20 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.15 (middle), 0.11 to 0.14 (high)
	School board's enacted plan	HCPSS parents argued the superintendent's plan was "inconvenient" and "too disruptive and radical" "We need to listen to the community." <i>Board member Delmont-Small</i> Enacted plan was "a compromise" <i>Board member Mallo</i>	Board's attempt to balance multiple priorities led to a plan with potential to increase segregation	Projected changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.12 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.12 (middle), 0.09 to 0.10 (high) Projected changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.17 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.16 (middle), 0.11 to 0.13 (high)

Figure 17. Data Integration for the Implementation Phase of Redistricting

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE				
Research Question	Concept	QUAL	Integrated Finding	quan
<p><i>To what extent did political dynamics influence the redistricting plans' effects on racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS?</i></p>	<p><u>Prospects</u> Implemented plan</p>	<p>"We never sent a message that [redistricting] was going to be delayed [due to the COVID-19 pandemic]. We are really moving along with this process." <i>HCPSS official</i></p>	<p>Enrollment loss changed proportions of students in racial/ethnic groups, which made it appear that racial/ethnic segregation decreased under the plan, when the plan increased segregation by reducing students' of Color exposure to White students</p> <p>Enrollment loss changed proportions of students in socioeconomic groups, which made it appear that socioeconomic segregation decreased under the plan, when FRPM students' exposure to non-FRPM students increased because there were fewer FRPM students in HCPSS</p>	<p>Changes to racial/ethnic segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.14 to 0.12 (elementary), 0.12 to 0.11 (middle), 0.09 to 0.10 (high)</p> <p>Changes to racial/ethnic segregation (interaction index):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asian/White exposure: 0.52 to 0.50 (elementary), 0.56 to 0.54 (middle, 0.61 to 0.59 (high) Black/White exposure: 0.44 to 0.43 (elementary), 0.44 to 0.43 (middle), 0.49 to 0.48 (high) Hispanic/White exposure: 0.55 to 0.55 (elementary), 0.61 to 0.59 (middle), 0.66 to 0.65 (high) <p>Changes to FRPM segregation (<i>H</i>): 0.19 to 0.15 (elementary), 0.14 to 0.13 (middle), 0.11 to 0.10 (high)</p> <p>Changes to FRPM segregation (interaction index):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRPM/non-FRPM exposure: 0.63 to 0.67 (elementary), 0.69 to 0.70 (middle), 0.75 to 0.76 (high)
		<p>"There were people who sent their kids to private school. ... They have the "Black Lives Matter" sign in their yard, but when the rubber hits the road in terms of equity, it's just like, "I can't send my child there." <i>HCPSS parent</i></p> <p>HCPSS enrollment dropped by 1,521 between 2019 and 2020, including fewer White students and FRPM students</p>		

effort would have been dramatic, given that Reardon and Yun (2003) suggest that “a change in H of 0.05 or more *in a decade* [emphasis added] represents a significant change in segregation levels” (p. 1570). An increase of 0.03 also would have exceeded the change in socioeconomic segregation in the decade leading up to redistricting: even at the elementary school level, where socioeconomic segregation increased the most, H only increased by 0.02.

Second, the board directed Superintendent Martirano to develop a recommended redistricting plan for the board's consideration. Martirano developed his plan based on feedback community members submitted in response to the Feasibility Study plans and input from the Attendance Area Committee (AAC), which was comprised of thirteen community members that he hand-selected, including several Black leaders in the county. Most parents who submitted feedback on the Feasibility Study options believed the redistricting plan should prioritize maintaining neighborhood schools. Yet, AAC members, along with a smaller contingent of parents from racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse villages in Columbia, believed the redistricting plan should prioritize desegregating schools. Ultimately, the superintendent, who espoused “equity” as one of his (and the school district’s) priorities, put forth a redistricting plan that he claimed advanced equity. Quantitative analyses of the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan revealed that it would have had an impact on racial and economic equity: his plan had the potential to reduce both types of segregation at most school levels (Figure 15).

After the superintendent presented his recommended plan to the school board in August 2019, Howard County community members—particularly wealthy White and Asian parents from western parts of the county—protested it in force. They crowded board meetings, arguing that the superintendent’s plan would unnecessarily burden their children with longer commutes while

doing nothing to address the resource disparities underlying educational inequities. They organized protests and petitions and formed a coalition called “Howard County Families for Education Improvement.” In response to pushback from these well-resourced community members, the school board chose to develop its own redistricting plan rather than move forward with the superintendent’s recommended plan. Two board members—Jen Mallo and Chao Wu—developed their own proposals. Mallo claimed that her plan balanced school capacity, community stability, and school diversity. But in trying to balance these conflicting priorities, Mallo developed a plan that was projected to increase socioeconomic segregation at all school levels. Similarly, by prioritizing community feedback and minimizing the number of students redistricting would impact, Wu developed a plan that was projected to increase socioeconomic segregation even more than Mallo’s plan would have (Figure 16).

The redistricting plans proposed by Jen Mallo and Chao Wu served as the basis for the plan that the board enacted in November 2019. Mallo framed this plan as “a compromise” between the three factors outlined in Policy 6010—capacity, community, and diversity—as well as a compromise among the various actors who had prioritized those values differently throughout the redistricting process. Despite some board members’ and community members’ efforts to delay the final vote, the majority of board members voted in favor of attendance boundary adjustments. While this vote may have appeared to be a “win” for redistricting, and potentially for desegregation, because the board at least passed a redistricting plan, quantitative results suggested that it was not an outright victory: the enacted plan was projected to decrease racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation at the elementary school level, but projected to increase it or leave it unchanged at the middle and high school levels (Figure 16).

Political factors during the implementation phase further undermined the redistricting policy's potential to reduce segregation. After board members voted to exempt several groups of students (e.g., rising eighth graders) from redistricting—meaning they would not have to attend the new schools to which they were reassigned—HCPSS parents tried additional strategies to circumvent the new attendance boundaries. Although most of these efforts fell flat, parents' flight to private schools—both as a result of redistricting and as a result of dissatisfaction with how HCPSS handled the COVID-19 pandemic—contributed to enrollment loss in 2020. The proportions of White students in the district dropped, as one might expect, given the countless studies that document White flight in response to desegregation (e.g., Fairlie & Resch, 2002; Zhang, 2011). Yet, proportions of FRPM students also dropped, likely because the federal government made free meals accessible to students—regardless of whether they had enrolled in the FRPM program—during the pandemic, which may have meant that low-income students could receive the services they needed without actually enrolling in the FRPM program (Toossi et al., 2021). Ultimately, these changes to HCPSS enrollment altered the proportions of students in various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the district, which made it appear that segregation—as measured by H —decreased under the implemented plan. However, a closer look at quantitative results from the interaction index revealed that racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation actually *increased* under the new boundaries. Asian, Black, and Hispanic students were exposed to White students at lower rates in 2020, relative to 2019, because HCPSS had fewer White students than in 2019. Furthermore, FRPM students were exposed to non-FRPM students at higher rates in 2020, relative to 2019, only because HCPSS had fewer FRPM students than in 2019 (Figure 17). Thus, the implemented attendance boundaries, themselves, did not necessarily reduce segregation in HCPSS.

The 2019-2020 redistricting process in Howard County affected community members' perceptions of diversity and equity in the district, as well as the political context of the county. While some White and Asian parents whose children were redistricted to schools with more low-income, Black, and Hispanic students believed that redistricting successfully increased school diversity, many other parents believed that it did not because patterns of residential segregation and under-resourced schools persisted. The heated political dynamics of redistricting also increased polarization and partisanship in the county, not only in the 2020 school board election but in coalitions of community members on either side of the redistricting debate that still remain active in county politics. It also made the superintendent and school board hesitant to engage in additional redistricting efforts that could desegregate schools.

Learning from a Critical Case of Redistricting

Redistricting in Howard County, Maryland, constituted a “critical case” (Yin, 2018), which provided the opportunity to test whether, under relatively favorable political conditions, school redistricting policies have the potential to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation. Studying a redistricting effort in a favorable political context, where the political barriers that often plague desegregation efforts are likely to be less salient, had the potential to offer insights into whether desegregation is a politically feasible policy goal for other districts. The favorable political conditions in Howard County during the 2019-2020 redistricting effort were threefold. First, the district had a county-based structure, meaning it was relatively large and diverse, and thus had the within-district diversity required to advance some degree of desegregation. Second, the school system and its superintendent, Michael Martirano, espoused commitments to educational equity, which align with the goals of desegregation policies. And

third, the county's economic center, Columbia, was designed to foster racial/ethnic and socioeconomic integration, implying some commitment to desegregation policies.

Were these “Favorable” Conditions Actually Favorable?

While allowing me to test whether desegregation is a feasible policy goal for districts, this study also allowed me to test the depth of “favorable” political conditions in Howard County. The county-based structure did afford HCPSS the diversity required to advance desegregation, at least to some degree. The larger structure of HCPSS gave it an advantage over fragmented districts in the Northeastern and Midwestern United States, which are typically racially/ethnically and socioeconomically homogeneous. Because *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) limits school systems' ability to implement between-district desegregation plans, many fragmented districts are unable to meaningfully desegregate schools. In other words, because those school systems have little within-district diversity, they can only move the needle on school desegregation slightly. HCPSS, on the other hand, possessed both racial/ethnic and, to a lesser extent, socioeconomic diversity, which meant that it could move the needle on school desegregation more than most other districts.

While a diverse population provided HCPSS with a structural advantage that many districts do not have, it was not a completely favorable condition for desegregation. The county-based structure of HCPSS meant that it was geographically large, and included urban, suburban, and rural residential areas. The fact that all of these areas were included within the same school district was beneficial because it provided HCPSS the opportunity to overcome residential segregation by redrawing school boundaries in ways that sent students from these different areas to the same schools. However, these different parts of the county had very different priorities when it came to education. For example, many residents living in socioeconomically diverse

villages in Columbia sought those villages because they valued diversity and integration. In contrast, many residents living in wealthy areas in the rural western part of the county sought those neighborhoods because they wanted their children to attend the schools in those areas, which were substantially less diverse than those in Columbia. Competing values among families in the same district contributed to a contentious redistricting process, and required the superintendent and board members to choose which values among these would lead. As evidenced by the lackluster plan the board enacted—which actually had the potential to increase segregation at some school levels—most board members were unwilling to push forward a redistricting plan that conflicted with what the most vocal and well-resourced community members wanted.

This study also tested the school district’s commitment to equity and educational opportunity. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the district’s espoused commitments—which are illustrated by its Strategic Call to Action (SCTA), entitled “Learning and Leading with Equity”—were largely symbolic. Superintendent Martirano, who implemented the SCTA, viewed it as a guiding document for the district’s decisions. And while HCPSS did track a variety of educational experiences and outcomes related to equity as a part of the SCTA, the SCTA itself was not a policy, and did not *require* the district to take action that would remedy these inequities. Furthermore, the SCTA did not bind the board—which possessed substantially more decision-making power than the superintendent—to remedying educational inequities. Rather, it appeared to be the superintendent’s pet project, which aligned with his own values and policy goals rather than those of the system as a whole. Although Superintendent Martirano grounded his recommended redistricting plan in the SCTA, the school board never once mentioned it in their deliberation of various redistricting alternatives. The superintendent’s commitment to equity

appeared more substantive than symbolic, largely because his recommended redistricting plan was the most likely of the proposed and enacted plans to have reduced racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS. But while Superintendent Martirano possessed the power to recommend a redistricting plan, he did not possess the power—like board members—to enact one. So, although the superintendent’s commitment to equity was a favorable political condition during the initiation phase, it was of little consequence in the enactment phase, when the board controlled the process, and the implementation phase, when he was merely responsible for implementing the plan the board had enacted.

Beyond the school system and the superintendent, many Howard County community members also claimed to value equity. Yet, community members used equity to argue for vastly different policy goals. For example, wealthy White and Asian parents from River Hill and other western parts of Howard County employed the term “equity” to oppose the superintendent’s plan, while parents from more diverse villages in Columbia employed it to support the superintendent’s plan and school desegregation more broadly. Thus, while just about everyone in Howard County claimed to value “equity,” they conceptualized that value contradictory ways, to the extent that, for some parents, “equity” appeared to be more of a political tool than a guiding value.

The most unique political condition in Howard County was the presence of Columbia, a community designed to foster integration, where diversity and inclusion were longstanding commitments. Columbia’s values came through in many community members’ advocacy for desegregation. In fact, many of the community members who advocated for desegregation lived in Columbia villages that were racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse. Whether living in a diverse community led them to support desegregation or they chose to live in a diverse

community because they supported desegregation is unclear, but the presence of these community members at least bolstered, if not directly influenced, the superintendent's decision to prioritize desegregation in his recommended redistricting plan. Yet, qualitative data suggested that even Columbia was not monolithic. Newer villages—namely, River Hill—were much less socioeconomically diverse, and they tended to oppose desegregation. Furthermore, while Columbia was the economic center of Howard County, it was only one part of it. Community members on the eastern and western parts of the county that surrounded Columbia did not necessarily share “Columbia values,” and certainly did not live in mixed-income areas, largely because of county zoning policies and development patterns. Here again, the sheer size and subsequent geographic diversity of the county meant that community members had vastly different experiences, and, in many cases, vastly different priorities for redistricting. Thus, in many ways, Columbia's values were not determinative in redistricting. Although a subset of parents from Columbia supported redistricting for desegregation, they ultimately had little political influence over the superintendent and school board. And perhaps more importantly, the segregation that the superintendent and some board members were trying to address in HCPSS was not *within* Columbia, but *between* Columbia and western and eastern parts of the county.

Does Redistricting have the Potential to Reduce Segregation?

Existing literature suggests that redistricting policies have mixed effects on segregation (e.g., Carlson et al., 2020; Siegel-Hawley, 2013; Taylor & Frankenberg, 2021). This study sought to understand the political dynamics affecting those outcomes. Insights on the feasibility of redistricting may help district policymakers identify the most effective strategies—that is, strategies most likely to reduce segregation, even in the midst of highly contentious politics.

In many ways, this “critical case” of redistricting was a typical one. As many scholars have documented in other contexts, wealthy groups of parents resisted a policy that would reassign their children to lower-income, predominantly Black and Hispanic schools, and, for the most part, the board ceded to their resistance. Furthermore, as political perspectives on policymaking suggest, political factors eroded the redistricting policy over the course of the policy process. While the superintendent’s proposed plan was a strong start, in that it had the greatest potential to reduce segregation in HCPSS, subsequent plans were much less likely to reduce segregation, and in fact, they were likely to increase segregation at many school levels.

Contextual, systemic, and actor-level factors all contributed to the erosion of prospects for reducing segregation over time. In the enactment phase, resistance from wealthy, White and Asian parents led the school board to reconsider, and ultimately decide not to, reassign those families to lower-income, predominantly Black and Hispanic schools. Additionally, the HCPSS policy that guided redistricting required the board to consider school capacity, community, *and* diversity when developing a plan, allowing board members to prioritize whichever of those three factors they found to be most important, but undermining their ability to pursue any of them fully. Given the enacted plan’s limited potential to reduce segregation, the majority of board members did not prioritize diversity, but their decision to prioritize overcrowding and community input does not necessarily suggest that they did not want to desegregate schools at all. Rather, it suggests that they were trying to solve a variety of problems with a single redistricting policy. Parents across the county, from a variety of racial/ethnic groups, wanted the school system to address *both* overcrowding *and* segregation through this redistricting effort. Ultimately, though, these goals appeared to conflict with one another. The schools that were the most overcrowded, like Howard High School, were not necessarily the most segregated. And the

schools that were the most segregated, like River Hill High School, were not necessarily overcrowded. Thus, adjusting attendance boundaries in ways that addressed one problem would not necessarily address the other, and, in some cases, could exacerbate it.

Although the redistricting policy's prospects for reducing segregation faded throughout the policy process, findings suggest that there were nevertheless strategies and windows of opportunity to advance desegregation. To be sure, advancing desegregation in the 21st century—after the Court limited districts' capacity to desegregate through *Parents Involved* (2007) and other cases—may only constitute slight changes in school demographics, even in diverse, equity-oriented districts like HCPSS. Furthermore, no agreed upon definition of “desegregation” exists; there is no one demographic composition that scholars and policymakers agree is guaranteed to advance the educational equity that desegregation policies have promised. Consequently, advancing “desegregation” in HCPSS may only mean advancing diversity and equity on the margins. But marginal progress is progress nonetheless. Analyzing this redistricting effort using a political framework, which attends to multiple types of political factors (e.g., actors' power, school district structure) and breaks the policy process down into different phases, helps to identify these encouraging, albeit small, windows of opportunity.

First, and at the most basic level, quantitative results indicated that some plans could have reduced racial/ethnic and/or socioeconomic segregation, at least at some school levels. Additionally, the implemented redistricting plan was associated with lower segregation than existed in 2019—although this apparent “win” for desegregation appeared to result at least in part from changes to the HCPSS population, rather than redistricting. Simply put, these findings suggest that, under political conditions like those that existed in Howard County, there *are* redistricting policy alternatives that have the capacity to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic

segregation. Furthermore, some of these alternatives, like Superintendent Martirano's recommended plan, had the potential to reduce segregation in terms of both the *distribution* of students across schools in the district—as measured by Theil's H —and in terms of the *interactions* between students of different groups—as measured by the interaction index. Distinguishing between these two dimensions of segregation is important, particularly because segregation as measured by H is dependent on the population of students within a district, while the interaction index is not. In other words, a district could have little diversity but still appear to have reduced segregation if that population of students became more evenly distributed throughout schools in the district. HCPSS, for example, is a relatively wealthy county, and serves fewer FRPM students than neighboring counties and the state overall. So, the fact that some redistricting alternatives had the potential to reduce socioeconomic segregation in terms of both H and the interaction index suggests that these plans could have had a meaningful impact on socioeconomic segregation by increasing the degree to which FRPM and non-FRPM students were exposed to one another, rather than just more evenly distributing those groups of students across the district. To be sure, more evenly distributing FRPM and non-FRPM students across the county *could have* increased exposure between the two groups, but would not necessarily have done so because HCPSS has relatively few FRPM students.

The fact that HCPSS has a county-based structure and is thus more diverse than smaller, more demographically homogeneous districts means that we should interpret these findings as a window of opportunity for redistricting to reduce segregation in districts with similar structures to HCPSS. As many scholars have suggested, smaller districts are much less likely to have the diversity required to advance desegregation (e.g., Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013). Thus, in those districts, even the most equity-oriented redistricting plans will likely only

move the needle on desegregation slightly, if at all. Larger, county-based districts like HCPSS, though, appear to have an opportunity to advance desegregation through redistricting. This finding is encouraging, given that many districts—particularly in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeastern United States—align with county boundaries. At the same time, the fact that racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation had grown in HCPSS in the decade prior to redistricting (and perhaps before that) suggests that a countywide structure itself does not *ensure* desegregation. Rather, school systems must intentionally prioritize combatting segregation if they are to capitalize on this window of opportunity.

While this study suggests that redistricting has the potential to reduce segregation, at least in county-based districts like HCPSS, it also suggests that proposing, enacting, and—most importantly—implementing desegregative redistricting plans is not a simple task. Yet, in Howard County, it was not an impossible one. The second window of opportunity identified in this study is illustrated by the politics and prospects of Superintendent Martirano’s recommended redistricting plan. Several political factors, which may be recreated in other districts, led the superintendent to propose a plan that could have reduced both racial/ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in HCPSS at most school levels. Most notably, the superintendent himself was committed to educational equity, and conceptualized equity—at least in this case—as reducing segregation. Not only did the superintendent have an *interest* in using redistricting to desegregate schools, he also had the *power* to propose his own redistricting plan. The Attendance Area Committee (AAC), comprised of Howard County community members, including Black leaders in the county, provided additional support for the superintendent’s goals, which suggests that advocates for desegregation could leverage positions as “insiders” in the school system to advance their policy goals. Several Howard County Council members provided support for these

goals too, although their intervention in the redistricting process ultimately backfired by generating additional opposition to the superintendent's recommended plan. Nonetheless, these political factors interacted to *support* the superintendent proposing a redistricting plan that had the potential to reduce segregation. This finding contrasts with much of the research on school desegregation efforts in the 21st century, which suggests that political factors often *undermine* desegregation efforts. Ultimately, this finding indicates that the politics of desegregation in the 21st century are not always characterized by opposition, and points to ways that other districts can try to recreate these supportive politics. For example, districts may prioritize hiring superintendents with demonstrated commitments to educational equity and who support desegregation, and ensure that these leaders have the power to at least propose their own desegregation plans. These and other actions for advocacy can open up additional windows of opportunity to advance desegregation, if only gradually.

To be sure, the supportive political factors that bolstered the superintendent's efforts to desegregate in the initiation phase of the policy process stood in stark contrast with the backsliding that characterized the enactment and implementation phases. Consequently, this study demonstrates that, while districts may have windows of opportunity to *propose* redistricting policies with the potential to reduce segregation, *implementing* these types of policies will likely remain a challenge. Even so, a closer look at the political factors that shaped redistricting in HCPSS suggests that whether districts implement these policies is not merely left to fate and local politics. One of the most consequential political factors throughout this redistricting process was systemic: the formal policy that guided boundary adjustments in HCPSS required the board to consider three competing factors—capacity, community, and diversity—when redistricting. To be sure, because this policy included diversity as a factor, the

board could not completely ignore it. However, the policy also did not require the superintendent and school board members to *prioritize* diversity, let alone desegregation, in their proposed and enacts redistricting plans. Given that the policy did not compel these policy actors prioritize desegregation, it is perhaps surprising and encouraging that any of the redistricting alternatives had *any* chance at reducing segregation. Requiring them to prioritize desegregation would likely have increased the chance that the board would enact and implement a redistricting plan that could reduce segregation. These systemic political factors, relating to the features and procedures of the school district and school board, are malleable. In other words, districts and school boards possess the power to modify or develop policies that guide redistricting efforts to mandate a focus on desegregation. Some, if not most, districts may not possess the political will to institutionalize desegregation as a priority in their policies. But those that do may open additional windows of opportunity to advance redistricting policies that have the potential to reduce segregation.

With regard to those districts that do not possess such political will, state oversight may be one way to encourage desegregation. For example, much like Maryland state legislators proposed doing through the bills they introduced in the implementation phase of redistricting in Howard County, states could mandate regular attendance boundary adjustments and require those adjustments to prioritize desegregation. To be sure, state legislators may not possess the political will to advance desegregation either, and state oversight itself may conflict with other values embedded in public education, like local control and democracy. Scholars have grappled with the balance between equality and democracy for decades (e.g., McDermott, 1999; Scribner, 2016), and there is no simple answer for how to do so. Yet, the case of redistricting in Howard County, and much of the desegregation literature, suggests that this choice is often a false one. In

the vast majority of studies, do not have an equal opportunity to participate in these policy processes. Even in Howard County, where one might say that the process was *more* democratic than in other districts because community members had ample opportunities to share their perspectives on redistricting, Black, Hispanic, and low-income parents were less involved than White, Asian, and wealthy parents. The imbalanced nature of these politics in Howard County and beyond suggest that desegregation policy processes are not entirely democratic. Thus, to prioritize local control by leaving desegregation in the hands of school districts over potentially furthering equal educational opportunities by reengaging state policy actors in desegregation processes is to perpetuate a long history of inequality in U.S. public schools.

Extending the School Desegregation Literature

While providing insights into the feasibility of desegregation as a policy goal for districts, this study also extends research on desegregation in many ways. The political framework and mixed methods design that guided this study provided an analytic structure to identify how various political factors shape redistricting efforts, and to what end. First, whereas many studies of the politics of desegregation focus on a subset of political factors, like parents' resistance to (e.g., Castro et al., 2022; Lareau et al., 2018) or legal constraints on equity-oriented school assignment policies (e.g., Dumas, 2011; McDermott et al., 2012), my conceptual framework offered a tool to identify how these factors *interact* with one another. Identifying interactions among these factors, rather than considering them in isolation, offers a more realistic picture of the policy process, considering that these factors do not operate in isolation in practice, and, thus, may provide more useful insights to policymakers. For example, this study revealed that systemic factors, like the priorities embedded within a policy, shape actors' interests and policy goals. While many scholars have written about the dynamics between political systems and

policy actors (e.g., Allison & Zelikow, 1999; Dahl, 1984), few have described their interplay during desegregation efforts. Additionally, this study revealed how contextual factors, including county policies, development patterns, and racist social and institutional structures can both motivate and shape actors' priorities for redistricting efforts. For instance, even though Howard County espouses ideals of inclusion and integration, and those values are embedded in the structure of most villages in Columbia, the school board prioritized the interests of wealthy, White and Asian actors above all. This dynamic was particularly evident in the board's decision to add four extra nights of public hearings about redistricting to accommodate River Hill parents, and became even more evident when the board opted to develop their own redistricting plan, rather than use the superintendent's recommendation, because many River Hill parents vehemently opposed it.

Second, this political framework separated the policy process into distinct phases, which provided insights into how the political dynamics evolved over time and shaped the policy's potential to fulfill its aims. For example, without separating the politics of the initiation phase from the politics of the enactment phase, one might miss the supportive political factors that occurred during that phase, as well as the potential the superintendent's plan had to reduce segregation. Furthermore, while these earlier prospects were not actually implemented, they illustrate the erosive (or supportive) nature of political dynamics over time. Likewise, only gauging how these politics shaped the effects of the implemented boundaries on segregation may have led to the imprecise and inaccurate conclusion that redistricting reduced segregation, without considering the contextual factors (i.e., enrollment loss) that also contributed to reduced segregation upon implementation of the new attendance boundaries.

Yet, the political framework employed in this study also had several shortcomings. In order to understand interactions amongst various individual concepts, the framework draws potentially arbitrary boundaries around particular concepts. In other words, the concepts embedded in this framework are treated as separate, when in reality, they are intertwined. For example, contextual political factors, particularly issues of race and racism, like most aspects of social structure and values, are inseparable from institutional structures and actors' power. While separating these factors into distinct concepts may make it easier for an analyst to identify them, it may also impose rigid boundaries that do not exist in policy processes on the ground.

Furthermore, this framework is grounded in political perspectives, primarily, and critical and race-conscious perspectives, secondarily. While these two perspectives align in many ways—particularly because race and racism emerge as important factors at contextual, systemic, and actor levels—this study suggests that they are not always compatible. The purpose of this framework was to dissect the policy process to identify the factors that shaped it and how they did so, with the ultimate goal of providing insights into windows of opportunity that may exist for advancing district-level desegregation policies in contexts including but not limited to Howard County. While I incorporated theories and literature on race and racism that illustrated how these factors played an integral part in the policy process, additional race-conscious concepts may have provided different insights about this redistricting effort. For example, one political factor that emerged in this case was the involvement of wealthy Asian parents and students. My conceptual framework led me to focus on the power that these policy actors possessed and the role they played in the redistricting process. Given that few studies of desegregation efforts in K-12 schools have documented the involvement of Asian families, this finding is both surprising and a unique contribution to the literature. Exploring this case from

critical Whiteness perspectives, which offer insights into how some Asian groups may benefit from a social and institutional structure that favors Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009), may have provided a different interpretation of this finding.

Despite these shortcomings, the framework employed in this study, coupled with a mixed methods research design, offered many insights that extend literature on the politics of school desegregation policies and these policies' prospects for reducing segregation. In terms of contextual political factors, this study offers insights about diversity and desegregation in suburban districts. Suburbs across the country are becoming increasingly diverse (Frey, 2022). As a result, suburban districts should—and may have to—consider advancing desegregation policies like redistricting to ensure that diverse groups of students within those communities have equitable educational opportunities. Frankenberg and Orfield (2012) offer a typology of districts that aims to capture how school systems are evolving amidst demographic changes, but studying desegregation in Howard County reveals that the lines between these different types of districts are blurry. For example, Frankenberg and Orfield (2012) suggest that districts may be exclusive enclaves, meaning they are bastions of wealth, or immigration meccas, meaning they have high populations of immigrants. Yet, Howard County is both an exclusive enclave, given the high median income of its residents, and an immigration mecca, given the growing population of Asian immigrants in the district. The fact that Howard County fits both of these “types” and more suggests that communities *within* suburban districts may vary dramatically, particularly as demographic shifts continue. Indeed, suburbs have been political battlegrounds for educational issues for decades (Kruse & Sugrue, 2006). While these changing demographics will likely require districts to employ desegregation and other policies to better serve their changing student populations, they also will likely change the politics of these districts. In

particular, growing diversity in the suburbs may make it even more difficult than it already is to advance redistricting policies with the potential to desegregate schools. Indeed, other studies of suburban districts conducted recently suggest that attendance zone boundary changes have the potential to desegregate schools, but generally did not do so (Asson et al., 2023), and that superintendents in suburban schools tend to face greater political barriers from the community when trying to advance policies (White et al., 2023). Thus, increasing diversity in suburban districts hardly makes progress toward desegregation inevitable, as many scholars have suggested (e.g., Frankenberg et al., 2019; Lichter, 2013).

This study also extends the school desegregation literature by providing insights into how school systems' structures, procedures, and values shape desegregation efforts, which—as discussed in Chapter 3—relatively few studies have explored. More specifically, it reiterates and extends findings from a handful of studies that suggest the electoral structure of school boards may influence desegregation policymaking (Frankenberg & Diem, 2013; Holme et al., 2014). For example, findings from this study suggest that desegregation efforts may, but do not necessarily, contribute to school board turnover and increase polarization and partisanship in school board races. These more contentious political dynamics may then dissuade district leaders and school board members from pursuing desegregation efforts in the future. Additionally, this study extends the small subset of studies on desegregation efforts in districts that espouse equity-oriented values by demonstrating that, even in the most “progressive” of places, community members may resist desegregation because they perceive it to conflict with other educational values—such as quality and proximity—that are important to them.

In addition to exploring how systemic political factors shape desegregation policymaking, this study highlights the roles of actors who are understudied in this literature.

Few studies of 21st century desegregation efforts, particularly redistricting efforts, explore how parents of Color, low-income parents, and policymakers at the district and school levels have sought to influence these policies. Findings from this study reveal how Asian parents and students in Howard County sought to influence redistricting. While several studies have explored Asian families' perspectives on affirmative action (e.g., Kim, 2018; Poon et al., 2019), to date, only a handful have explored Asian families' perspectives on K-12 school desegregation (e.g., Kim, 2001; Quinn, 2020). Many Asian parents who sought to influence redistricting in Howard County used strategies similar to those that studies suggest many White parents have used to resist desegregation, and in particular, to resist having their children reassigned to predominantly low-income, Black, and Hispanic schools. For example, a recent study by Andrene Castro and colleagues (2022) found that analyzed written testimonies that community members submitted in response to a rezoning effort in Richmond, Virginia, found that many White parents opposed the policy because they thought it would disrupt their communities, impinge on their liberty, limit students' ability to walk to school, and reduce school quality. Additionally, parents argued that, while they supported desegregation, they did not support this particular desegregation policy. These rhetorical strategies used by White parents in an attempt to separate desegregation from other educational values (e.g., quality, proximity) and to legitimize resistance to desegregation by claiming that they support other forms of "equity," also emerged in the case of redistricting in Howard County. However, the community members who employed these arguments most often, at least publicly, were Asian.

Some scholars have argued that some Asian groups reap social and structural benefits from their proximity to Whiteness (Leonardo, 2009; R. Liu et al., 2023; W. Liu, 2017); thus, in some ways, it is unsurprising that Asian families in Howard County employed similar arguments

against desegregation to White families in Howard County and other contexts. But it also seems too simple to treat Asian and White resistance to desegregation the same, given that, in most ways, Asian people remain minoritized in American society—which recent evidence of anti-Asian hate made particularly clear (Wong & Ramakrishnan, 2021). These findings, then, suggest the importance of further exploring the racial/ethnic political dynamics of desegregation efforts, which may be particularly prevalent in diversifying suburbs like Howard County.

Beyond highlighting the role of Asian families in this desegregation effort, this study also centered district-level policymakers' perspectives on and involvement in redistricting. In particular, it focused on the interests, power sources, and influence strategies of the superintendent and school board members, as well as how community members sought to influence these actors, and whether and why these influence efforts affected their decisions. Just a handful of studies have explored the roles of superintendents, school board members, and other district officials in 21st century desegregation efforts (e.g., Diem et al., 2015), even though these actors are responsible for initiating, enacting, and advancing these policies and possess the most *formal* power to influence desegregation policy processes. In this study, I capitalized on publicly available data, including school board and district documents and observations of recorded school board meetings, to identify these actors' interests, power sources, and influence strategies. Ultimately, these data revealed the importance of exploring the roles these actors play in redistricting and other desegregation efforts, particularly at different stages of the policy process. School board members often appear as background actors in recent studies of desegregation efforts; they seem to be puppets that community members—particularly wealthy White community members—control. Wealthy White parents are often portrayed in this literature as the “villains” of desegregation. And while it is true that these actors have often resisted and,

subsequently, undermined desegregation efforts, portraying board members and other district officials as pawns at the whim of these community members takes both agency and responsibility away from the actors who actually possess the authority to desegregate (or not). Indeed, this study suggests that, at least in Howard County, district actors have their own interests—often though not always apart from community members’ interests. Furthermore, this study suggests that political dynamics *between* school board members can shape desegregation policy processes—not only by creating turmoil and confusion throughout these processes, but also by leading boards to enact desegregation policies that are compromises, or that, put differently, meet no actor’s policy goals—including reducing segregation—fully.

Interestingly, this study also indicates that local and state government actors may be re-entering the desegregation policymaking arena, after desegregation was left largely in districts’ hands in the late 20th century. During the initiation and enactment phases of redistricting, the Howard County Council tried to push the superintendent and school board to desegregate through a county resolution. And during the implementation phase of redistricting, Maryland state delegates tried, through legislation, to recapture some power over redistricting from school districts. The involvement of these general stream governance actors did not always directly impact the redistricting process, but it did influence the process by shaping the narrative about it. The county council’s involvement, in particular, affected how community members who opposed redistricting for desegregation responded to the superintendent’s recommended redistricting plan, which then affected how the school board opted to move forward after his recommendation. Overall, these findings suggest that attending to interactions among local and state policymakers, rather than just between policymakers and community members, are key to understanding how desegregation policies are initiated, enacted, and implemented.

In addition to extending literature on the political dynamics of desegregating schools, this study also provides insights into how these political dynamics shape desegregation policies' potential to fulfill their aims by using strategies from political theory to gauge actors' influence over policymaking processes and employing a mixed methods research design. Although many studies have suggested that political factors generally undermine desegregation efforts (e.g., Diem, 2017; Holme et al., 2016; McDermott et al., 2015), few have determined the extent to which they do so (see Mawene & Bal, 2020; Siegel Hawley et al., 2017 for examples). Furthermore, the existing studies that do indicate the degree to which political factors undermine desegregation policies' potential to reduce segregation only consider those policies' outcomes upon implementation, and do not gauge whether particular policy alternatives had any potential to reduce segregation in the first place. My study uses a novel mixed methods design to explore the prospects—or potential for reducing segregation—associated with various redistricting policy alternatives, which allows me to gauge the effects of political factors at various points in time during the policy process. Capturing these snapshots of potential is important because, as previously noted, many of the political factors that erode policies' potential to reduce segregation are manipulatable—that is, district officials, board members, or other policymakers possess at least some degree of power to change these political factors in ways that make them more favorable, or at least less erosive. And if scholars and policymakers understand which political factors are most influential in affecting desegregation policies' potential to desegregate schools, we can better target these changes to maximize these policies' potential to advance desegregation.

Methodological Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study extends the school desegregation literature in many ways, it is not without qualitative and quantitative data limitations, which provide additional directions for future research. First, although I draw from a variety of qualitative data sources to gauge HCPSS parents' perspectives on and involvement in redistricting, my interview sample did not include many Asian parents and any Hispanic parents. Fortunately, many parents and students who participated in public hearings and submitted written testimony about redistricting identified themselves as Asian—these observations and documents were publicly available and thus included in this analysis. However, interviews with Asian community members may have provided additional information about the reasons why many of them resisted redistricting for desegregation. On the other hand, few community members who participated in public hearings and submitted written testimony identified themselves as Hispanic. Thus, Hispanic parents and students are virtually absent from this study, which is particularly unfortunate given that the Hispanic population in Howard County has grown substantially in recent years and that many of the schools at the center of opposition to redistricting served relatively high percentages of Hispanic students. While I did ask interview participants who were engaged in the redistricting process whether they had seen evidence of the district and school board making intentional efforts to include Hispanic parents and students in the decision-making process, these data do not directly address Hispanic parents' and students' perspectives on redistricting. Additionally, while the lack of evidence about Hispanic community members' perspectives on and involvement in redistricting may suggest that this group was excluded from the process, it may also suggest that they chose not to be involved in it for a variety of other reasons. The same is true for low-income parents, who were also under-represented in my interview sample. While other scholars have noted barriers to incorporating minoritized parents' perspectives in desegregation research (e.g.,

Reed, 2014), the commonality of these limitations does not trump the importance of addressing them. Ultimately, these limitations point to future research directions that other scholars have called for—namely, conducting research on desegregation that explicitly centers the perspectives of racially/ethnically and socioeconomically minoritized groups (Horsford, 2019).

Second, my interview sample did not include district officials, including the superintendent, or school board members. Interviews with these actors likely would have provided more detailed information about their interests and the political dynamics between them that went on behind the scenes, and thus were not captured by publicly available documents or observations of board meetings. Recruiting district officials and school board members to participate in studies about desegregation efforts—particularly if they are still serving the district that engaged in a desegregation effort—seems to be a fairly common limitation in the school desegregation literature. Many studies rely on documentary data or historical accounts, although they do not always explicitly describe their data sources (e.g., Bartels & Donato, 2009; Serbulo, 2019). Others also draw on interviews with community members (e.g., Diem, 2017; Frankenberg & Kotok, 2013) or, as a more recent study did, use publicly available data like written testimonies to explore the politics of desegregation (Castro et al., 2022). This limitation is unsurprising, given how politically contentious desegregation efforts tend to be. However, if districts are serious about desegregating schools, they must engage with researchers—at least to some extent—to help us advance the knowledge base around these policy efforts. At the same time, researchers must be willing to partner with districts, rather than impose studies on them, in order to produce scholarship that is both rigorous and relevant to the policymakers in charge of advancing the policies we are studying. Additionally, researchers may capitalize on publicly available data sources, like the written testimonies and school board meetings analyzed in this

study, to better capture district officials' and board members' perspectives and influence efforts regarding school desegregation policymaking.

Finally, in addition to these qualitative data limitations, quantitative data were limited in several ways. While the novel research design employed in this study led to important insights about how political factors shape desegregation policy efforts, it also required me to access quantitative data in creative ways. Because many of the proposed redistricting alternatives, including the Feasibility Study options and the superintendent's recommendation, were not actually implemented, we could not know the actual effects they had on segregation in HCPSS. Thus, the enrollment data associated with these alternatives—and the segregation rates that stemmed from them—are *projections* and should be interpreted as estimates of these plans' effects on segregation. Furthermore, for many of these projections—particularly the redistricting plans proposed by board members Jen Mallo and Chao Wu—I had to rely on incomplete data. To protect students' privacy, FRPM projections were often redacted, which required me to estimate FRPM numbers. Additionally, the documents that detailed these two redistricting plans did not provide projections for racial/ethnic enrollment rates, so I could only calculate projections for socioeconomic segregation. Thus, I was not able to gauge the potential effects of these plans on racial/ethnic segregation, which provided incomplete comparisons between these and other redistricting alternatives. More broadly, comparing the potential effects of all redistricting alternatives with segregation trends in the decade leading up to redistricting and with segregation rates under the implemented plan required enrollment data from two different sources: the National Center for Education Statistics and HCPSS. Because these entities determine enrollment rates at different points during the school year, enrollment rates and

projections from these two data sources varied slightly. Thus, comparisons between segregation rates and projections from these different sources should, again, be viewed as estimates.

Despite these limitations, this study is one of the first to explicitly link the politics of desegregation with specific policies' potential to reduce segregation. Future research may focus on addressing these qualitative and quantitative data limitations by developing partnerships with school districts to gain access to more data—and more accurate data. Studies may also build on the political framework and research design employed in this study to refine and extend them. For example, critical scholars may incorporate additional race-conscious concepts into this framework to more fully capture the racial/ethnic political dynamics of desegregation policymaking. Additionally, scholars may conduct similar studies that link the politics and prospects of desegregation in other suburban contexts—particularly those that are more socioeconomically diverse than Howard County.

Chapter Summary

Despite limitations with qualitative and quantitative data sources, this study generated several insights about the political factors that shape desegregation policymaking and how those factors affect desegregation policies' prospects for reducing segregation. Ultimately, findings from the critical case of redistricting in Howard County suggests that desegregation—if only on the margins—is, indeed, a feasible policy goal for districts. Put differently, under favorable political conditions, desegregation policies do have the potential to reduce segregation. However, realizing the potential of these policies, particularly in contexts where conditions are less favorable, will require districts to modify or enact policies in ways that either a) explicitly prioritize desegregation, rather than allowing policymakers to attempt to balance desegregation with other, often competing policy goals (e.g., reducing overcrowding, maintaining

neighborhood schools), or b) align desegregation with other policy goals, rather than pitting it against them. While the latter option may be the most politically feasible, it may also be impossible, given that desegregation is often in conflict with these other policy goals—although it may not have to be. This study also extended the school desegregation literature in several ways by employing a political framework and a novel mixed methods research design. Future studies may further explore the politics of desegregation from the perspectives of actors underrepresented in the literature and in this study—including Asian parents, Hispanic parents, and district- and school-level policymakers—and investigate the relationship between the politics and prospects of desegregation in other contexts.

Appendix A

Type of Qualitative Data Source	Example(s)	Purpose
Document	News articles	Offer information about recent events related to education in Howard County and redistricting efforts in Howard County in 2019 or years prior
	Board meeting agendas and documents	Agendas provide information about in which meetings the board discussed redistricting and who participated in discussions; other documents include copies of presentations to the board about redistricting and written testimonies of Howard County community members who testified to the board about redistricting
	HCPSS press releases	Offer information about the timeline of the redistricting process and how the district communicated about the redistricting policy throughout the process
	HCPSS formal policy on school boundary adjustments	Provides information about decision-making procedures regarding redistricting, considerations and priorities for redistricting policies, and which policy actors have authority when during the redistricting process
Observations	Board meetings where redistricting was on the agenda	Provides information about the superintendent and board members' priorities for redistricting, dynamics between the superintendent and the board, and dynamics between board members
	Public testimonies to the board about redistricting	Provides information about who testified to the board about redistricting, what their policy goals regarding redistricting were, why they advocated for those goals, and how the board facilitated and responded to community input about redistricting
	Board work sessions to deliberate potential redistricting plans	Provides information about board members' priorities for redistricting, dynamics between board members, and how those dynamics shaped the development of proposed and enacted redistricting plans
Interviews	Interviews with elected officials	Provides information about elected officials (e.g., board members, county councilmembers) efforts to influence the redistricting decision-making process and Howard County community members' efforts to influence their decisions regarding redistricting
	Interviews with Attendance Area Committee (AAC) members	Provides information about AAC members policy goals and power with regard to redistricting, as well as the superintendent's policy goals and behind-the-scenes political dynamics between the superintendent and the AAC
	Interviews with HCPSS parents	Provides information about which groups of parents were involved in the redistricting process; what their interests, policy goals, power resources, political strategies, and motivations were; their efforts to influence the redistricting decision-making process; and their efforts to influence the outcomes of the redistricting policy

Appendix B

Hi! Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As I mentioned in my email, my name is Kayla Bill and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Education Policy program at the University of Maryland, College Park. This interview is part of a study that I am conducting about the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) efforts to redistrict during the 2019-2020 school year.

I have been following the redistricting policy since fall 2019, when it started gaining publicity, and have read news articles, watched videos of board meetings, and reviewed other resources to learn more about it. But press accounts, board meetings, and public documents rarely tell the whole story, so I am talking with people who were involved in the redistricting process to flesh out how this policy was enacted and implemented.

As noted on the consent form that I shared with you, I would like to audio- and/or video-record our conversation today to make sure that I am accurately capturing your perspectives. *[If consent form indicates permission to record: I see from the consent form that I have your permission to record, so I will begin recording now. **START RECORDING.**]* Your identity and the information you share today will remain confidential throughout the research process.

Do you have any questions before we begin our conversation?

Let us start at the very beginning of the redistricting process.

INITIATION PHASE

1. Who initiated redistricting?
 - a. Why did they do so?
 - b. What do you think they were trying to accomplish with redistricting?
2. The press accounts I read indicated that several different redistricting plans were proposed to the board and the community. Who proposed these various plans, and what were they trying to accomplish with these different proposals?
3. How did the individuals who proposed these plans try to garner support for them?
 - a. Who was particularly effective at garnering support for their proposal?
 - b. What made them effective?
4. Who supported the different plans?
 - a. Why did they do so?
 - b. How did they try to garner support for their position?
5. Who opposed the different plans?
 - a. Why did they do so?
 - b. How did they try to garner support for their position?

ENACTMENT PHASE

6. Amidst all of the different redistricting plans that were proposed, how did the plan that the board enacted in November 2019 come to be?
7. Who supported the board's effort to enact a redistricting plan?
 - a. What strategies did they use to try to influence the board's decision about which plan to enact?
 - b. Who was particularly effective at influencing the board?
 - c. What made them effective?

8. Who resisted the board's effort to enact a redistricting plan?
 - a. What strategies did they use to try to influence the board's decision to redistrict?
 - b. Who was particularly effective at influencing the board?
 - c. What made them effective?
9. Why did the board enact the policy they did?
 - a. What sorts of compromises, if any, were required to get this policy across the finish line?

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

10. Who led the effort to implement the policy?
11. Who supported the implementation effort?
 - a. How did they support it?
12. Who resisted the implementation effort?
 - a. How did they resist it?
 - b. How, if at all, did their resistance influence the redistricting plan's ability to do what it set out to do (i.e., reassign students to new schools)?
13. All in all, do you think this policy fulfilled its aim of ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all students?

CONTEXT

14. Columbia was a planned community that sought to integrate people with various racial/ethnic and socioeconomic identities—a goal that seems aligned with the goal of redistricting. How, if at all, did that context play into the dynamics of advancing this policy?
15. School districts are often constrained by court rulings that limit their ability to cross district boundary lines and to use students' race in school assignment decisions. How, if at all, did these legal factors play a role in shaping the redistricting policy?

OTHER

16. Is there anything else you would like to share with me

Appendix C

Code	Subcode(s)	Description
Sociopolitical context	Housing segregation Legal context Demographic changes	Includes contextual factors at the local, state, and national level that shaped the redistricting process.
Inputs	Demands Supports	Includes factors that prompted the district to consider redistricting. Demands include the “conflict” that prompted redistricting, and supports include evidence that constituents believed HCPSS had the right and responsibility to redistrict.
Political system	Structure Values Procedures	Includes the district and its characteristics. Structure includes the district’s country-based setup, governance, and organization. Values include the district’s espoused values. Procedures include how the district operates and its operating norms.
Policy actors	Interests Power resources Political skill Political will	Includes individuals and groups who participated in the policy process and their characteristics. Interests include implicit or explicit values and policy goals. Power resources include resources that actors could have or did draw on for power. Political skill includes the skill with which actors use (or preserve) their power resources. Political will includes actors’ willingness to deploy their power resources.
Influence efforts	Advocacy Resistance	Includes actors’ use of their power resources to influence the redistricting process or decision.
Initiation phase		Includes policy actors and influence efforts during the initiation of redistricting. Initiation began when the superintendent initiated the formal redistricting process in January 2019 and ended when the superintendent presented his recommendation to the board. This phase includes the 2019 feasibility study options, the superintendent’s recommendation, and other redistricting proposals that occurred during that time.
Enactment phase		Includes policy actors and influence efforts during the board’s

		enactment of a redistricting policy. Enactment began when the board started discussing the superintendent's recommendation and ended when the board voted on a formal attendance boundary adjustment. This phase includes board members' proposed redistricting plans, the plan they voted to enact, and other plans that were discussed during that time.
Implementation phase		Includes policy actors and influence efforts during the board's implementation of the enacted redistricting policy. Implementation began after the board's vote and continued through fall 2020, when the plan went into effect.
Outcomes	Segregation Political	Includes the redistricting plan's effects on segregation, distributions of power, actors' policy goals, etc. after it was implemented in fall 2020.
Feedback		Includes evidence of how outcomes have reshaped local, state, or national context and re-entered the political system as inputs.
Other		Includes data that do not fit into one or more of the existing codes.

Appendix D

Source of Data	Policy Phase/Time Period	Type of Data
National Center for Education Statistics	Decade prior to redistricting (2010-2019)	District- and school-level enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and FRPM status
Howard County Board of Education documents	Feasibility Study redistricting plans (initiation phase: June 2019)	District- and school-level enrollment projections by race/ethnicity and FRPM status
	Superintendent's recommended redistricting plan (initiation phase: August 2019)	
	Board member Jen Mallo's proposed redistricting plan (enactment phase: October 2019)	
	Board member Chao Wu's proposed redistricting plan (enactment phase: October 2019)	
	School board's enacted redistricting plan (enactment phase: November 2019)	
National Center for Education Statistics	Implemented redistricting plan (Fall 2020)	District- and school-level enrollment rates by race/ethnicity and FRPM status

Appendix E

Asian/Black/Hispanic/White Segregation			
Prospect	Elementary	Middle	High
2010	0.1234	0.0987	0.0784
2011	0.1209	0.1108	0.0805
2012	0.1252	0.1150	0.0873
2013	0.1211	0.1122	0.0880
2014	0.1261	0.1120	0.0911
2015	0.1298	0.1113	0.0959
2016	0.1283	0.1074	0.0978
2017	0.1299	0.1142	0.0963
2018	0.1307	0.1113	0.0910
2019	0.1351	0.1158	0.0946
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.1453	0.1168	0.0970
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.1453	0.1160	0.1033
Feasibility Study Option 3	0.1433	0.1198	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.1444	0.1183	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.1443	0.1198	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 6	0.1449	0.1197	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.1451	0.1198	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.1438	0.1196	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 9	0.1452	0.1198	0.1032
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.1438	0.1198	0.1032
Superintendent's Plan	0.1274	0.1007	0.0858
Enacted Plan	0.1234	0.1195	0.0959
Implemented Plan	0.1247	0.1122	0.0951

Appendix F

FRPM/non-FRPM Segregation			
Prospect	Elementary	Middle	High
2010	0.1660	0.1361	0.0963
2011	0.1690	0.1389	0.0976
2012	0.1744	0.1474	0.1107
2013	0.1814	0.1492	0.1067
2014	0.1927	0.1505	0.1108
2015	0.2022	0.1466	0.1303
2016	0.2211	0.1496	0.1271
2017	0.2179	0.1386	0.1219
2018	0.2238	0.1345	0.1114
2019	0.1924	0.1436	0.1111
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.2175	0.1644	0.1252
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.2175	0.1600	0.1403
Feasibility Study Option 3	0.2185	0.1644	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.2182	0.1629	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.2177	0.1644	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 6	0.2177	0.1647	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.2175	0.1644	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.2175	0.1638	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 9	0.2176	0.1636	0.1562
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.2176	0.1644	0.1562
Superintendent's Plan	0.1724	0.1274	0.1151
Enacted Plan	0.1953	0.1514	0.1181
Implemented Plan	0.2003	0.1518	0.1352

Appendix G

Elementary School Level	Asian/ White	Asian/ Black	Asian/ Hispanic	Black/ White	Black/ Asian	Black/ Hispanic	Hispanic/ White	Hispanic/ Asian	Hispanic/ Black	White/ Black	White/ Hispanic	White/ Asian
Prospect	0.5155	0.3470	0.2388	0.4404	0.3521	0.323	0.5504	0.4482	0.5975	0.3141	0.2122	0.3731
2010	0.6671	0.3920	0.2681	0.5138	0.3230	0.2974	0.6984	0.4947	0.6657	0.2368	0.1437	0.2533
2011	0.6508	0.3891	0.2585	0.5229	0.3421	0.3005	0.6896	0.4986	0.6590	0.2415	0.1452	0.2642
2012	0.6292	0.3740	0.2491	0.5117	0.3470	0.2994	0.6798	0.5052	0.6544	0.2444	0.1485	0.2788
2013	0.6283	0.3637	0.2391	0.5065	0.3442	0.2977	0.6668	0.4931	0.6488	0.2554	0.1543	0.2998
2014	0.6080	0.3518	0.2346	0.4961	0.3423	0.2999	0.6439	0.4805	0.6312	0.2642	0.1629	0.3150
2015	0.5832	0.3438	0.2288	0.4801	0.3459	0.2999	0.6206	0.4774	0.6221	0.2745	0.1711	0.3354
2016	0.5659	0.3402	0.2285	0.4750	0.3477	0.3065	0.6134	0.4723	0.6199	0.2855	0.1823	0.3477
2017	0.5426	0.3482	0.2302	0.4566	0.3501	0.3028	0.5936	0.4763	0.6229	0.3028	0.1913	0.3618
2018	0.5258	0.3514	0.2319	0.4472	0.3555	0.311	0.5806	0.4697	0.6228	0.3095	0.2006	0.3682
2019	0.5249	0.3533	0.2212	0.4648	0.3632	0.2981	0.6179	0.4882	0.6399	0.3106	0.1924	0.3606
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.5250	0.3362	0.2042	0.4479	0.3467	0.2949	0.5780	0.4486	0.6282	0.2972	0.1801	0.3593
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.5250	0.3362	0.2042	0.4479	0.3467	0.2949	0.5780	0.4486	0.6282	0.2972	0.1801	0.3593
Feasibility Study Option 3	0.5306	0.3360	0.2045	0.4478	0.3464	0.2953	0.5780	0.4488	0.6284	0.2965	0.1799	0.3623
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.5259	0.3356	0.2067	0.4473	0.3465	0.2966	0.5795	0.4514	0.6273	0.2966	0.1817	0.3600
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.5259	0.3342	0.2024	0.4482	0.3472	0.2945	0.5779	0.4486	0.6284	0.2981	0.1802	0.3634
Feasibility Study Option 6	0.5263	0.3364	0.2032	0.4478	0.3471	0.2945	0.5776	0.4477	0.6289	0.2975	0.1797	0.3607
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.5251	0.3359	0.2040	0.4479	0.3468	0.2949	0.5780	0.4486	0.6282	0.2975	0.1802	0.3601
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.5258	0.3359	0.2043	0.4525	0.3469	0.2964	0.5827	0.4477	0.6291	0.2976	0.1806	0.3572

Feasibility Study Option 9	0.5248	0.3356	0.2039	0.4477	0.3457	0.2952	0.5793	0.4479	0.6298	0.2972	0.1803	0.3589
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.5253	0.3380	0.2053	0.4478	0.3497	0.2954	0.5771	0.4532	0.6303	0.2972	0.1795	0.3607
Superintendent's Plan	0.5289	0.3591	0.2240	0.4704	0.3718	0.2976	0.6081	0.4903	0.6292	0.3135	0.1917	0.3650
Enacted Plan	0.4996	0.3580	0.2463	0.4332	0.3646	0.3227	0.5512	0.4651	0.5984	0.3349	0.2298	0.3934
Implemented Plan	0.5155	0.3470	0.2388	0.4404	0.3521	0.323	0.5504	0.4482	0.5975	0.3141	0.2122	0.3731

Middle School Level	Asian/ White	Asian/ Black	Asian/ Hispanic	Black/ White	Black/ Asian	Black/ Hispanic	Hispanic/ White	Hispanic/ Asian	Hispanic/ Black	White/ Black	White/ Hispanic	White/ Asian
Prospect	0.5569	0.3720	0.2490	0.4399	0.3377	0.3064	0.6077	0.4861	0.6587	0.3206	0.2060	0.3685
2010	0.7257	0.4311	0.2717	0.5643	0.3288	0.2586	0.7825	0.5721	0.7137	0.2277	0.1144	0.2234
2011	0.7097	0.4148	0.2575	0.5297	0.3097	0.2585	0.7561	0.5370	0.7219	0.2387	0.1220	0.2388
2012	0.6850	0.3975	0.2503	0.5138	0.3126	0.2657	0.7383	0.5338	0.7207	0.2443	0.1294	0.2561
2013	0.6677	0.3902	0.2454	0.5113	0.3250	0.2748	0.7278	0.5295	0.7121	0.2522	0.1385	0.2742
2014	0.6460	0.3905	0.2522	0.5002	0.3344	0.2829	0.7144	0.5354	0.7011	0.2620	0.1510	0.2897
2015	0.6274	0.3770	0.2466	0.4969	0.3340	0.2872	0.7041	0.5300	0.6967	0.2722	0.1590	0.3045
2016	0.6168	0.3808	0.2513	0.4866	0.3370	0.2903	0.6866	0.5280	0.6890	0.2868	0.1705	0.3218
2017	0.5940	0.3713	0.2405	0.4629	0.3278	0.284	0.6671	0.5172	0.6918	0.2985	0.1766	0.3381
2018	0.5785	0.3730	0.2590	0.4513	0.3383	0.306	0.6327	0.5098	0.6640	0.3068	0.1982	0.3567
2019	0.5777	0.3946	0.2487	0.4772	0.3584	0.2935	0.6460	0.5129	0.6662	0.3258	0.1943	0.3583
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.5779	0.3709	0.2460	0.4533	0.3405	0.3017	0.6208	0.4975	0.6646	0.3037	0.1889	0.3555
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.5770	0.3707	0.2454	0.4551	0.3397	0.3002	0.6246	0.4990	0.6661	0.3058	0.1892	0.3554
Feasibility Study Option 3	0.5762	0.3670	0.2418	0.4510	0.3351	0.2994	0.6224	0.4919	0.6672	0.3032	0.1878	0.3536
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.5791	0.3677	0.2441	0.4518	0.3352	0.3006	0.6230	0.4922	0.6647	0.3034	0.1892	0.3546
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.5762	0.3670	0.2418	0.4510	0.3351	0.2994	0.6224	0.4919	0.6672	0.3032	0.1878	0.3536

Feasibility Study Option 6	0.5761	0.3676	0.2417	0.4511	0.3352	0.2991	0.6222	0.4917	0.6673	0.3038	0.1878	0.3537
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.5762	0.3670	0.2418	0.4510	0.3351	0.2994	0.6224	0.4919	0.6672	0.3032	0.1878	0.3536
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.5761	0.3671	0.2421	0.4513	0.3357	0.3005	0.6221	0.4917	0.6672	0.3029	0.1881	0.3536
Feasibility Study Option 9	0.5760	0.3667	0.2418	0.4521	0.3352	0.2997	0.6224	0.4919	0.6670	0.3031	0.1875	0.3529
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.5762	0.3670	0.2418	0.4510	0.3351	0.2994	0.6224	0.4919	0.6672	0.3032	0.1878	0.3536
Superintendent's Plan	0.5825	0.3708	0.2396	0.4490	0.3381	0.2954	0.6180	0.4941	0.6681	0.3020	0.1838	0.3573
Enacted Plan	0.5389	0.3731	0.2550	0.4250	0.3392	0.3081	0.5896	0.4927	0.6547	0.3431	0.2240	0.3955
Implemented Plan	0.5569	0.3720	0.2490	0.4399	0.3377	0.3064	0.6077	0.4861	0.6587	0.3206	0.2060	0.3685

High School Level	Asian/ White	Asian/ Black	Asian/ Hispanic	Black/ White	Black/ Asian	Black/ Hispanic	Hispanic/ White	Hispanic/ Asian	Hispanic/ Black	White/ Black	White/ Hispanic	White/ Asian
Prospect	0.6062	0.3937	0.2720	0.4905	0.3443	0.3104	0.6585	0.5111	0.6671	0.3189	0.1992	0.3446
2010	0.7506	0.4298	0.2792	0.6259	0.3183	0.2643	0.8344	0.5615	0.7175	0.2338	0.1148	0.2077
2011	0.7399	0.4297	0.2804	0.6100	0.3192	0.2703	0.8124	0.5501	0.7138	0.2431	0.1226	0.2191
2012	0.7298	0.4271	0.2784	0.5914	0.3207	0.2724	0.7920	0.5442	0.7090	0.2444	0.1257	0.2265
2013	0.7142	0.4285	0.2874	0.5723	0.3218	0.2743	0.7798	0.5495	0.6984	0.2559	0.1369	0.2398
2014	0.6979	0.4170	0.2762	0.5546	0.3280	0.2773	0.7617	0.5496	0.7015	0.2611	0.1417	0.2584
2015	0.6764	0.4116	0.2720	0.5346	0.3253	0.2844	0.7278	0.5280	0.6988	0.2754	0.1526	0.2754
2016	0.6518	0.4013	0.2645	0.5210	0.3370	0.2935	0.6981	0.5215	0.6892	0.2861	0.1632	0.3005
2017	0.6329	0.3988	0.2647	0.5150	0.3416	0.3034	0.6837	0.5098	0.6820	0.2985	0.1763	0.3143
2018	0.6204	0.4072	0.2702	0.5029	0.3464	0.2985	0.6847	0.5278	0.6855	0.3145	0.1864	0.3300
2019	0.6245	0.4165	0.2712	0.5054	0.3502	0.2903	0.6991	0.5398	0.6873	0.3224	0.1884	0.3350
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.6188	0.4272	0.2785	0.4883	0.3311	0.2946	0.6614	0.5050	0.6893	0.3272	0.1894	0.3214
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.6201	0.3951	0.2504	0.4864	0.3390	0.2864	0.6761	0.5207	0.6941	0.3033	0.1740	0.3318

Feasibility Study Option 3	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 6	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 9	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.6186	0.3918	0.2393	0.4969	0.3378	0.286	0.6733	0.5053	0.7003	0.3091	0.1710	0.3317
Superintendent's Plan	0.6194	0.3992	0.2562	0.4957	0.3417	0.29	0.6884	0.5235	0.6923	0.3138	0.1826	0.3357
Enacted Plan	0.5898	0.3860	0.2761	0.4795	0.3422	0.319	0.6456	0.5034	0.6562	0.3289	0.2153	0.3586
Implemented Plan	0.6062	0.3937	0.2720	0.4905	0.3443	0.3104	0.6585	0.5111	0.6671	0.3189	0.1992	0.3446

Appendix H

Prospect	FRPM/Non-FRPM			Non-FRPM/FRPM		
	Elementary	Middle	High	Elementary	Middle	High
2010	0.6916	0.7600	0.7991	0.1546	0.1315	0.1257
2011	0.6720	0.7300	0.7798	0.1639	0.1486	0.1373
2012	0.6629	0.7132	0.7639	0.1664	0.1546	0.1403
2013	0.6443	0.7009	0.7581	0.1727	0.1608	0.1482
2014	0.6325	0.6915	0.7385	0.1714	0.1677	0.1588
2015	0.6117	0.6917	0.7119	0.1779	0.1723	0.1656
2016	0.5938	0.7080	0.7398	0.175	0.1591	0.1504
2017	0.6019	0.7195	0.7553	0.1709	0.1585	0.1413
2018	0.6031	0.7141	0.7668	0.165	0.1664	0.1378
2019	0.6275	0.6892	0.7476	0.1738	0.1772	0.1515
Feasibility Study Option 1	0.5838	0.6312	0.6719	0.188	0.2034	0.199
Feasibility Study Option 2	0.5838	0.6360	0.6776	0.188	0.2044	0.1838
Feasibility Study Option 3	0.5835	0.6317	0.6698	0.1877	0.2034	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 4	0.5836	0.6319	0.6698	0.1879	0.2045	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 5	0.5838	0.6317	0.6698	0.188	0.2034	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 6	0.5838	0.6316	0.6698	0.188	0.2033	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 7	0.5838	0.6317	0.6698	0.188	0.2034	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 8	0.5836	0.6325	0.6698	0.1881	0.2033	0.1793

Feasibility Study Option 9	0.5841	0.6329	0.6698	0.1881	0.2032	0.1793
Feasibility Study Option 10	0.5839	0.6317	0.6698	0.1878	0.2034	0.1793
Superintendent's Plan	0.6203	0.6597	0.6900	0.2035	0.2158	0.1967
Mallo's Plan	0.6006	0.6620	0.7237	0.1938	0.1927	0.1691
Wu's Plan	0.5976	0.6652	0.7087	0.1927	0.1899	0.1651
Enacted Plan	0.6367	0.6567	0.7101	0.1883	0.1928	0.1714
Implemented Plan	0.6725	0.7031	0.7632	0.1749	0.1762	0.1488

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