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What Schooling is and What it Could Be: Exploring How We Learn the Discourses and Technologies of Public Education in School-Adjacent Spaces

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Abstract: In the US in recent years, public engagement in public schools has become highly politicized, reflecting the polarized discourses circulating in media and inflamed by national figures. "Official" spaces for public input exist alongside multiple less officially policy-relevant spaces where youth and adults learn and negotiate the function/ing of public education. This symposium examines how diverse school-adjacent spheres of public life function as pedagogical spaces - spaces where the discourses and technologies of schooling are learned through the cognizant and non-cognizant design and organization of discourse and activity. The cases considered span from youth-centered spaces such as the school bus and a middle school debate team to a case examining the intersection of how news and social media is negotiated at a public committee meeting and closing with two contrasting examples of school district-sponsored public forums addressing issues such as overcrowding and budget.

Symposium overview

As persistent issues of inequality in educational spaces rise to the forefront of national conversations in the US, we are reminded that education and schooling is everyone's business. Even those who are not presently children, parents, teachers, or school administrators have at some point experienced school, learning through experience what school is, shaping ideas about what it should or could be, and licensing public commentary on education from people in all walks of life. Notably, the school building is not the only place where we learn what school is, what it can be, or how to participate in public discourse shaping policy in response to these questions. In this symposium we consider how people learn in and through school-adjacent spaces both what school is or can be and how to participate in public discourse about school.

In the US, public engagement in public schools (schools supported by public funds) has become a highly politicized space, reflecting the polarized and often vitriolic discourses circulating in media and inflamed by national figures. "Official" spaces for public input, such as through the election of public school boards, open school board meetings, and district-sponsored public forums exist alongside multiple less officially policy-relevant spaces where youth and adults learn and negotiate the function/ing of public education, drawing on long histories and reflecting possibilities for our children's futures.

Public school boards, one type of semi-public forum for shaping public education, is one space where an official governing body has substantial power as it "(a) defines reality, (b) orders behavior, and (sometimes) (c) allocates resources accordingly" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 770). Public participation and commentary on policy making is one place we can look to to see how the status quo is maintained or challenged. On the one hand, public spaces like school boards can be places of possibility where citizens have the opportunity to affect policy making decisions, as described by Collins (2021): "This opportunity for efficacy [in affecting policy decisions] is particularly available at the local level, where schools boards and city councils govern within reach of the citizenry" (p. 790). However, school board meetings in particular are often an authoritative and ritualistic (e.g., Robert's rules of order) space where local politics and civic life collide in less-than-transformative ways. Learning to engage with the body politic of school boards, and likewise learning to participate in formal debate, requires learning genres of public comments, of argumentation, rebuttal, and the power of non-authorized policy actors

(i.e., students, teachers, community members; Collins, 2021; Jenkins, 2022; Levinson et al., 2009; Tracy & Durfy, 2007).

Other types of spaces organize public engagement with education in different ways, opening alternative affordances for learning and numerous ways that actors can be positioned. For instance, public engagement in participatory grassroots organizing efforts—building on affinity spaces as well as affordances of connected social media spaces—shows potential for citizenship that can organize into powerful vehicles for demanding critical and consequential change (Ito et al., 2015). This does not mean that informal or grassroots organizers are inherently equitable, as social power differentials can lead to the privileging of certain narratives and inequitable results—particularly narratives driven by white supremacy (Ewing, 2018; Joffe-Walt et al., 2020).

Youth participation in public narratives on education abound, but are seldom recognized as legitimate civic participation and may even be positioned as disrespectful or insubordinate (Kelly, 2020). Interactions in places such as social media or after-school clubs and activities provide insight into youth perspectives and the ways they both learn and teach the ways of talking, thinking, and participating in shaping the future of education and school. We are interested in how youth spaces such as the debate team or even school buses may be important political spheres for learning about schooling.

Conceptual framework: School-adjacent spaces as pedagogical

We examine how diverse school-adjacent spheres of public life function as *pedagogical* spaces - spaces where the discourses and technologies of schooling and public participation in public schooling are learned through the cognizant and non-cognizant design and organization of discourse and activity in those spaces. In other words, "space is treated as a product of social practice, not simply a frame for it" (Nespor, 2000, p.25). We bring together diverse cases in order to consider how different spaces beyond the school building may shape how the public learns what public school is or can be. We see this work as extending emerging work in the learning sciences that explores learning as political by examining learning in and as a feature of power in the political spheres of public life (Booker et al, 2014; Esmonde & Booker, 2016; The Politics Writing Collective, 2017). Moreover, we suggest that understanding these spaces as pedagogical may provide critical insight into how our imaginations are shaped regarding what is possible in schools and add to work that "elucidate[s] the way that policy typically serves to reproduce existing structures of domination and inequality" (Levinson et al., 2009, p. 769) as well as looking at ways these policies can be disrupted.

Format

The cases considered span from youth-centered spaces such as the school bus and a middle school debate team to a case examining the intersection of how news and social media is negotiated at a public committee meeting and closing with two contrasting examples of school district-sponsored public forums addressing issues such as overcrowding and budget. The symposium format intentionally brings together diverse cases in order to consider official and unofficial policy-relevant spaces, voices from youth and adults, and examples of both the perpetuation, disruption, and re-storying of existing narratives surrounding purposes and possibilities of public schooling. After each case, virtual and in-person participants will have time to discuss and compare the pedagogies of each case.

The symposium itself will be briefly introduced by the Co-chairs, Karis Jones and Emma Gargroetzi. Each of the five cases will be presented. Following these presentations, Discussant Tanner Vea, with expansive expertise studying power, politics, and learning, particularly in social change efforts and design, will provide commentary on the necessity and potential of understanding school-adjacent spaces as pedagogically consequential for education and public school. A significant portion of the time will be held for discussion and conversation with attendees. We invite participants to consider with us: Where and how does learning across these five cases suggest reproduction or transformation in the face of material and discursive systems that shape schooling? How might unveiling these possibilities and constraints support new forms of learning and engagement with public education?

Significance

In a moment where high-stakes decisions about banning books, silencing history, restricting bathrooms access, and arming teachers with automatic weapons threaten the lives and livelihood of both children and adults in schools, the stakes of the political life of schools continue to grow. Yet, these decisions are largely made outside of schools themselves. This symposium contributes needed attention to the question of where and how people learn what can and should be expected from schools, and what it means to participate in conversations about these very topics. In framing and examining the activity of these school-adjacent spaces as pedagogical, we offer a lens that may be productive for uncovering insights about the design and organization of these spaces as products of

social practice (Nespor, 2000). In unveiling the socially produced nature of these spaces, we leave them open for disruption, and can perhaps more freely imagine them being produced anew, with more just and joyful possibilities for the future.

Re-storied journeys: The school bus and the narrative of public education

Antero Garcia

This paper explores the role of the school bus as a form of public discourse about education and the ways youth voices are largely silenced in their daily commutes as passengers to and from sites of formal education. Everyday, millions of students across the US rely on public school buses to get to and from school. These gigantic vehicles-brightly painted, hissing with hydraulic brake systems, and puttering away slightly below the speed limit improbably operate out of the vision of school policy and social discussion. These vehicles impact nearly every school in the US and yet seem to be invisible when it comes to discussions of schooling and structure. The fact that the school bus does not come up as a central policy discussion (except for when a global pandemic causes it to stop operation) is a reminder of how central the school bus is to the day-to-day operation of schooling.

Despite not changing in design for nearly a century, the school bus's function as an intervention on the educational outcomes of students in the US makes it the most substantial form of educational technology in this country (Garcia, in press). As a cognitive technology, the school bus disrupts education in two ways. First, its role in shifting school demographics post Brown v. Education is so profound that the verb "busing" is synonymous with addressing desegregation mandates. Second, as a hulking piece of machinery, the bus is a form of (albeit) archaic technology that acts on the lives of young people every day. Both of these disruptions are so persistent and long lasting that it's arguable that they are even disruptions at this point rather than a part of the status quo.

Spending a year of ethnographic participant-observation (Geertz, 1973) alongside young people on a school bus and engaging in historical research on the development of the school bus and the policies that structure it, this paper explores how public engagement with the school bus reinforces an understanding of the bus as implicit and necessary in the operation of public schooling. Every moment of on-bus bullying, of traffic-control through the use of a blinking set of lights, and of picking up and dropping off of kids at local stops is a reminder that these buses act as a part of the seamless infrastructure of American schooling (Edwards, 2021). Further, as a temporary space that reorients and transforms the behaviors and possibilities of its users, the archaic bus is also a reflection of contemporary representation of the role of platforms on education and policy (e.g. Gillespie, 2010; Srnicek, 2017).

Finally, drawing on the work of Thomas and Stornaiuolo (2016), the narrative of the school bus is not fixed; we can "restory" it. While the narrative of the school bus conveys it as a sometimes uncomfortable but necessary component of how students interact with and participate in schooling in the US However, through shifting the gaze of schooling from a structural analysis of school systems to a humanistic perspective of young people's learning opportunities, this paper argues that school buses might be sites for resistance, imagination, and realigning public discourse.

Reconstructing debate as public pedagogy: Advocating for speculative civic futures

Nicole Mirra

Purpose

This paper illuminates the organization of learning within a middle school debate team that sought to transform the activity of debate from an academic exercise to a critical enactment of public pedagogy aimed at envisioning new possibilities for civic life. Specifically, it examines how youth who identified as recently arrived immigrants remixed a policy debate topic asking them to consider "both sides" of immigration restrictions. By rejecting artificial premises of "pro" and "con" argumentation, sharing personal family histories, and inviting judges, opponents, and community members to consider a borderless civic future, the team fostered a transformative public learning environment encouraging heteroglossic dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; Vossoughi, 2014) to temporarily create a speculative public sphere (Mirra & Garcia, 2022).

Theoretical framework

The paper draws upon frameworks of cultural historical activity theory (Cole & Engeström, 1993), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and borderlands theory (Anzaldúa, 1987/2012) along with critical race approaches to debate (Reid-Brinkley, 2012) and shares interpretive ethnographic analysis of several key interactions among the

debate team participants to reveal how the activity system of the afforded opportunities to re-mediate binaries that often stymie efforts at critical civic dreaming and movement building in hybrid formal/informal learning spaces (Zavala, 2016) – binaries including citizen/immigrant, school/community, and objectivity/bias.

Methodology

The Debate Liberation League (DLL) - the name that the debaters chose for their team - included ten middle school students and three adult mentors. Grounded in social design-based methodology (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016), data collected over the course of one school year included field notes from 15 debate practices (2 h each), as well as audio recordings of selected discussions and practice rounds (5 h). Interviews were conducted with the three adult mentors (30-60 min each) and two focus groups were conducted with the students (60 min each). Artifacts included student reflections/notes, debate case materials, poetry, and analytic memos co-written by the students and researcher.

Findings and implications

Student debaters altered the structure and function of traditional policy debate structures in order to claim their right to public space and re-define the terms of persuasion from a policy win to an ontological affirmation of their humanity. They utilized performative literacies to re-envision debate not as a battle for a zero-sum win, but as a way to discursively construct a more equitable civic sphere that valued (immigrant) marginalized voices. This paper focuses on moments of public pedagogy that speak to possibilities of dialogue across difference as well as the ways that the grammar of schooling and normative structures of US civic life continuously interrupt and complicate these moments. For instance, during debate rounds, the DLL made translated copies of all of their personal narratives and calls to advocacy around borderless society so that opposing team members and judges would be able to understand everything students were saying and to encourage them to participate in a border crossing linguistic experience. An adult mentor also provided live translation services when the team began qualifying for national tournaments as both a means of ensuring accessibility for all during a round and of stressing the importance of bilingualism as a method of opening debate to a wider range of expressive possibilities.

"We cannot sacrifice one child for another": Articulations toward public theories of learning

Jasmine Y. Ma, Christopher Ostrowdun, Lauren Volgelstein, & Ali R. Blake

While a substantial goal of the learning sciences is the construction of theories around learning, alternative theories simultaneously develop in other domains. In this paper, we investigate theories of learning constructed in public spheres of discourse around education. We begin to characterize these *public theories of learning* and offer one way they get shaped, through *articulations* (Hall, 1986), or linkages, of news and social media content that mediate the boundary between activity internal to schooling and public spheres. There are multiple interacting lines of communication between school and the public at play simultaneously (e.g., news, social media, parent councils), and these are not neutral, but subject to interpretation as fragments from across lines are articulated by the public. In other words, instead of concerning ourselves with meanings inherent in these communications, we analyze meanings produced through connections between fragments through public discourse. Interrogating these articulations helps us understand "how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse" (p. 53). In our case, we explore how they serve to make connections between the contentious space of what happens in schools and public discourses about schooling. These articulation practices are one way that news and social media are organized as pedagogical spaces, shaping the public's perspectives about what *does* happen in schools and what *could* happen in schools (Hall, 1989).

We explore public discourse around a New York City (NYC) public middle school, M.S. 100, where, in the fall of 2021, students were involved in a series of verbal and physical fights (as were students at several schools at the time; Green, 2021). We focus here on incidents that occurred at M.S. 100 and how they were addressed by the parents of the children involved, school staff, members of the local school board, known as the Community Education Council (CEC), and others in the public sphere without direct involvement in the incidents. Disagreements and physical altercations between students are not uncommon, though detailed knowledge of their occurrence rarely leaves the school's sphere (e.g., the students involved, parents, school administration), in part to protect the privacy of children. The incidents at M.S. 100, however, circulated beyond the school's sphere and became highly publicized in mainstream news and social media.

While there is no singular "public," the term is salient to the CEC, which is charged with solicitation of public input and is required to hold regular meetings open to the public, with time allocated for public speaker

sessions, where anyone can sign up to speak on a topic for two minutes. The CEC's use of "public" refers to anyone not a member of the Council itself. Additionally, we recognize that public discourses may address what could be named a "common concern," but in fact are not common at all due to systemic societal inequities (Fraser, 1990). For example, "common concerns" of violence reported at a local middle school: a concern for the safety of a primarily white portion of the student body; a concern for effective use of taxpayer money in public schools; or a concern for healing and restorative justice of a community hit hard by the pandemic lockdown and remote schooling. The public sphere is multiple, with its discourses populated by counterpublics "where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (p. 67). Using a critical perspective, we take up the multiplicity of common concerns at a public NYC CEC meeting to better understand how news and social media were articulated to construct public theories of learning.

Methods

Data included a publicly-available recording of one 5.5-hour CEC meeting which occured in February 2022, as well as news and media items featuring M.S. 100 between September 2021 and February 2022. We investigated how news and social media were variously deployed and resisted in the service of public understandings of–and arguments around–fights and subsequent events at M.S. 100, a large racially and economically diverse public middle school. Rather than attempting to identify what "really" happened, our analysis focused on how articulations were constructed and used by various people and groups, depending on their position and priorities. Then, we surfaced public theories of learning embedded within these articulations; we treated arguments about how learning happens and what factors influence it as public theories of learning, looking for arguments that were constructed and deployed regularly (in demonstrably relevant ways) within the meeting we analyzed. We used methods of interaction analysis that privilege the meaning-making of participants (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). We examined turns at talk that showed how people contributed to shaping the lines of communication and articulations of information, and how they were linked to spheres of discourse (Hall, 1986). Articulations are "thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions." (Hall, 1986, p. 53). For our analysis, we position the CEC as straddling the spheres of the school and the public, and the CEC meeting as a space where members of the spheres engage in shaping and using lines of communication.

Findings

Below, we summarize two articulations of news stories centering interviews of Isabella, the parent of a student involved in incidents at M.S. 100, and zoom in on how one of them gives shape to a public theory of learning commonly deployed by conservative members of the CEC. In news stories published by conservative US news outlets Fox News and the New York Post, and in a speaking turn at the CEC meeting, Isabella provided descriptions of the "verbal and physical abuse" their son had experienced, arguing that the school's approach of "restorative justice is not working [and] kids need to learn accountability for their behavior." She also publicized two Snapchat groups as evidence of the severity of the incidents called "Yo, we on drugs" and "M.S. 100 Fights" where students shared video clips of the incidents.

One articulation from within the sphere of the school by Naomi, a Parent Teacher Association co-president at M.S. 100, critiqued both the information within and the existence of the line of communication itself. Naomi remarked on "concerns around the misrepresentation, misinformation, and misunderstandings" about what information was conveyed. She also critiqued Isabella's and others' publicizing this information as an "organized campaign of negativity" and a "major distraction" that "has traumatized, demoralized, and…confused the children." In Naomi's articulation, the "negative light" in which Isabella and others who publicized M.S. 100 "reeks of fear and racism." She contrasts this with depicting M.S. 100 as "a school that represented every child" in the district, and that believes "children make mistakes. Children are not disposable." These linkages between fear and racism and the negative misrepresentation and misinformation about M.S. 100 are further held together by the counter-representation of every child being cared for and not disposed of at the school.

In contrast, Councilmember Leung, of the CEC, supported the use of news outlets as a mechanism to make the happenings of schooling public and accountable to public spheres. Leung argued, the Department of Education (DoE) had a history "where incidents happened, [and] it's been covered up," and that the "free press…[has a] responsibility…to report on things." Leung urged "all families to report it to the police and make noise." Leung's articulation of school safety, DoE cover-ups, reporting to free press and police to protect children leveraged Isabella's representations of *some* children at M.S. 100 as violent and disruptive, ratifying her public representation of M.S. 100. Additionally, Leung produced a linkage between the free press and the police holding the DoE accountable against a backdrop of debate over whether school safety is the concern of social workers or the police, as well as discourses of carcerality (Wang, 2018) in schools. We argue that these elements articulated

together in this way reproduced, as Naomi argued, a racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2018), the articulation and ideology mutually elaborating one another.

Leung continued, pitting "violent children" against "the 29 other students in that classroom," arguing that "we cannot sacrifice one child for another," that "children will not learn" if there is fear in the classroom, and "they will have social emotional problems on top of that." At the same time he acknowledged "this child…need[s] support, but…we cannot wait, put them back in the classroom." Leung's rationale for police intervention brought into relief a theory of learning that centered the fear, social emotional state, and learning of "the other 29" while denying those for the child he characterized as "violent" and "disruptive" (as opposed to, for example, considering the violent incident as situated and a characteristic of the context rather than an individual). This is an example of a public theory of learning–pitting hypothetical, individual, undesirable children against "our" children who for a variety of reasons, deserve safe, rigorous, or otherwise well-resourced learning environments–that emerged repeatedly in speakers' articulations of news and social media that ferried information from within schools into the public sphere.

Significance

Leung's call to report information to the free press is not what it seems. The news and social media do not simply communicate neutral pieces of information, but instead provide a space for articulated interpretations that uphold particular ideologies. These articulated interpretations are not held together as natural fact but made to cohere (Hall, 1986) by people, and give shape to public theories of learning. Our paper provided an example of how fragments from the same event (Isabella's report to the news and the CEC) were made to cohere in two different articulations, with different ramifications for how the public understood what was happening at M.S. 100. As well, the associated public theories of learning are necessarily situated and sociopolitical. The analysis is important for expanding our understandings of how members of the public sphere make sense of what is happening in schools and participate in collective action.

The production of a crisis at Wilhelm Elementary: Collective construction of a discourse through parents' public comments

Carlos Nicolas Gómez Marchant, Alexandra R. Aguilar, & Emma C. Gargroetzi

We demonstrate our modeling of the "webs of mutually constituting statements that represent and position people and social phenomena in particular ways" (Shah & Leonardo, 2016, p. 51) from a community's two opposing sides on the attendance rezoning of Wilhelm Elementary. Our objective is to demonstrate the collisions and coalescences over time of each side's shared discourses. We see the construction of a collective model through civic and political engagement as a form of learning the racialized discourses of a political space to be more influential in determining district policy and regulations. Castro et al. (2022) emphasizes the need to focus on the racialized discourses existing within the constructed models of rezoning schools within these political spaces.

Theoretical framework

A critical race spatial perspective follows the tenets of critical race theory (see Delgado & Stefencic, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and expands them to incorporate a spatial dimension inspired by Soja's (2010) and Du Bois' (1904/1994; see Morrison et al., 2018; Solórzano & Veléz, 2016). These tenets guided our exploration of whiteness in the political discourse revolving around the two opposing sides in the rezoning of Wilhelm. A critical race spatial perspective provided the tools necessary to follow Leonardo's (2004) call to reveal the discourses of whiteness. In this study, we view the parents' continuous interactions with racialized discourses as learning how to participate in differing political spheres of influence.

Method

Creator ISD is a large independent school system located in central Texas. The district administration organized five opportunities for public comments to be made by community members about changing the attendance zone of Wilhelm Elementary. A total of 81 public comments were given by 45 individuals. The five meetings were recorded by Creator ISD and made publicly available online per the Texas Open Meetings Act. Public comments were transcribed by the research group for analysis. We implemented a grounded theory approach for our discourse analysis of the public comments (Malagon et al., 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). We began by coding for actors (e.g., students, renters, homeowners) and issues (e.g., overcrowding, infrastructure). Through a process of code comparison within and across code groups and the five school board meetings, analytic memoing, and research team conversation we articulated a theory describing how three layers of discourse collided and coalesced

to produce an outcome of school rezoning that re-segregated a district along racial and socioeconomic lines. Specifically, we identified these three layers of discourse as: 1) Production of a crisis; 2) The modeling of the crisis; 3) Leveraging the model for political gain.

Preliminary results

Those advocating for the shift of Wilhelm's attendance zone instigated the production of a crisis. Consequently, the first layer of discourse focused on the production of the overcrowding student crisis that necessitated urgent intervention by the school board. The crisis discourse emphasized costs to children's learning and well-being. This forced those opposed to the changes to Wilhelm's attendance zone to respond to the constructed crisis. The second layer of discourse entailed modeling the crisis as a mathematical model of equality (Tate et al., 1993) that included and excluded certain variables as ir/relevant and in/appropriate. Thereby shifting the framing of the crisis from one of overcrowding to one of student population balance across school sites. The final layer of discourse involved parents leveraging the objective and neutral myth of mathematics to gain political influence. These layers of discourse are evidence of the parents' learning of political engagement within the confines of school boards. These findings help in deconstructing political discourses and emphasize the role mathematics plays in civic engagement.

Schools can't do more with less: Reframing budget narratives in the Jersey City public schools

Karis Jones, Jyl Josephson, & Nooreen Fatima

Context

Often cited as the most diverse city in the U.S., Jersey City is a rapidly gentrifying area with a divide between the city residents and the youth enrolled in the public schools, as the Jersey City Public Schools serve a larger percentage of Black and Brown youth (and a lower percentage of White or Asian youth) compared to the city's overall population. In 2008, New Jersey adopted a new funding formula intended to provide guidelines for how much revenue local districts should contribute as well as the level of state funding required to provide for the educational needs of students in each district.. By 2018, the legislature passed S2, a revision of the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 SFRA, with a seven year time frame to reduce state adjustment aid to districts that, according to the formula, were "overaided"--receiving more in state adjustment aid than the state formula indicated they should receive. This was bad news for Jersey City. The state adjustment was scheduled for a seven year process of defunding, with an increasing percentage taken from Jersey City each year. Given how the formula was written, the actual dollar amount of state aid withdrawn would be determined each budget year, adding more uncertainty to the process. The "local fair share" for Jersey City was hundreds of millions of dollars more than the existing school tax levy. This meant that the school tax would need to be increased significantly and quickly. Without significant annual increases in the local levy, it would be impossible to run the school district. This paper will examine how this issue of school budget was framed and contested in the discourse surrounding a Jersey City school board budget vote in March 2021.

Theoretical framework

With respect to school funding, one current ideological battle in the public square is the conceptualization of school as a commodity vs. a public good. Kumashiro (2020) explains that viewing schooling as a commodity leads to problematic consequences with respect to social-economic status, as poorer communities pay greater percentages of their income while still seeing less per-pupil spending. Kumashiro urges that such issues must be seen through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991), particularly as histories of racism and classism contributed to the structural inequalities built into property tax systems. Thus, we take up a critical framework on equitable public funding in a way that surfaces the intersectionality between race as well as other identities such as SES, disability, and immigrant status.

Data & methods

The researcher team intentionally brings together various positionalities across the Jersey City educational landscape: Dr. Jyl Josephson, resident since 2004 and parent of a child attending the local schools as well as a leader in the Education Team in the grassroots activist group Jersey City Together; Dr. Karis Jones, resident since 2015 and relative newcomer to the JCT Education Team, and Nooreen Fatima, joining as an analyst with experience in local public organizing contexts. See Table 1 for the breakdown of research questions, data sources, and analysis techniques.

The team collaboratively applied critical discourse analysis tools to critically examine these sources for ideological conflicts around the budget crisis. Following Ewing (2018), we take up tools of muted racism--"when people make statements that are subtly racist not because of what is said, but because of what is not said" (p. 178)--to show how stakeholders are constructed in public discourse in racialized ways. This framework from Davis (2007) includes three tools surfacing racism in discourse even when it is not directly mentioned: deflection, indexicality, and omission. Deflection is the technique of minimizing and dismissing racism as the cause of social problems clearly connected with race. Attending to indexicality allows the researcher to examine how people use coded words to make statements about race without explicitly saying it. Finally, omission is the way that data showing racial disparities is discussed without mentioning racism as the cause. We take up all these tools through an intersectional lens, looking for ways that the intersectionality between SES as well as other identities such as race, disability, and immigrant status were defected, indexed, or omitted.

Table 1
Methods Table

Research Question	Data Sources	Analysis Technique
RQ1: How are the stakeholders and competing narratives around the JCBOE school budget constructed and leveraged in public discourse in intersectional racialized ways? RQ2: What are some of the discursive moves used by the public to engage/combat discourses of inequity?	-Jersey City and Jersey City Public School Demographics -Newspaper articles relating to JCBOE Budget from 2020-2021 -Transcript of March 2021 Special Budget Hearing -Field Notes of JCT Meetings collected from 2020 - 2021	Critical discourse analysis using tools of muted racism (Davis, 2007) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Kumoshiro, 2020)

Findings & significance

Addressing RQ1, we saw several ways that racism and other intersectional identities were deflected, indexed, or omitted with respect to marginalized youth in the district but explained more thoroughly with respect to adult stakeholders. In local reporting about issues of equity in the district, the marginalized status of youth were indexed through categorizations such as English language learners, students with special needs and students who qualify as free and reduced lunch (often used as a proxy for low socio-economic status). However, in the article no work was done to contextualize for the readers how these categories related to educational barriers, even though each of these categories have complex ties to race (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Abrham et al., 2011). On the other hand, in reporting discussions about the tax base, the concerns of taxpayers were described in detail, with journalists reporting on complex sociopolitical forces at play in the city including rising rent costs due to gentrification--a phenomenon explicitly at the intersection of race and SES. Oddly enough, the equity concerns relating to low-SES city residents who had not even called in to the budget meeting were animated in detail while the forces oppressing the 16,000 students qualifying for free and reduced lunch were left for the readers to parse out for themselves.

To answer RQ2, we saw that to respond to narratives of deflection that elevate low-SES taxpayer struggles above the needs of youth, parents explicitly named the structural inequities experienced by children in the city. Instead of othering certain groups of students by merely indexing marginalized categories, parent activists used collective possessive pronouns (e.g. "our kids," "our schools") to emphasize how the collective student population was being harmed by underfunding. Parents responded to issues of omission by calling in with specific examples of ways that the underfunding led to inequities, describing how they had seen their children's schools struggling with overcrowding, overworked teachers and staff, and lack of resources and support services. Though they point to the experiences of particular marginalized groups ("I have been hearing a lot, lately, some of the woes of the parents with children with special needs and how they have to fight to get the services that their kids deserve"), they also pointed to the collective benefits of these services ("All kids could benefit from [smaller class size, one-to-one support, gyms, occupational therapy]").

To combat tools of omission, we saw parents explicitly naming the connection between deprioritization and students' intersectional identities: "Our schools only have 27% of the property tax pie when the state average is 53%. Why do public officials think our children deserve so much less? Is it because a majority of them are English-language learners, come from under-resourced neighborhoods, are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, and have special needs?" In this comment, the parent activist explicitly named how intersectional forces of marginalization keep resources away from the youth in Jersey City, in explicit contrast to other wealthier and whiter cities across New Jersey. Through the use of such tools which worked to "unmute" racism hidden or

omitted in stories about taxpayers, activist parents worked to shift the narrative, leading to the passing of a fully funded local budget in 2021.

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