



Schools and the Legacy of Redlining

John J. Voyer, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor of Business Administration
University of Southern Maine

40th ISDC
Frankfurt, Germany
July 2022



Systemic Racism

- A situation under which members of minority races experience deleterious outcomes, such as higher arrest rates or greater wealth inequalities, stemming from explicit or implicit bias.
- Even though explicit bias is mostly illegal, systemic racism may still exist because of structures of policy or behavior that generate unnecessarily lopsided outcomes.



Systemic Racism

- One such systemic structure involves how school districts assign students to schools, using “school attendance zones” that may be vestiges of the now-outlawed practice of “redlining” urban neighborhoods.



Redlining

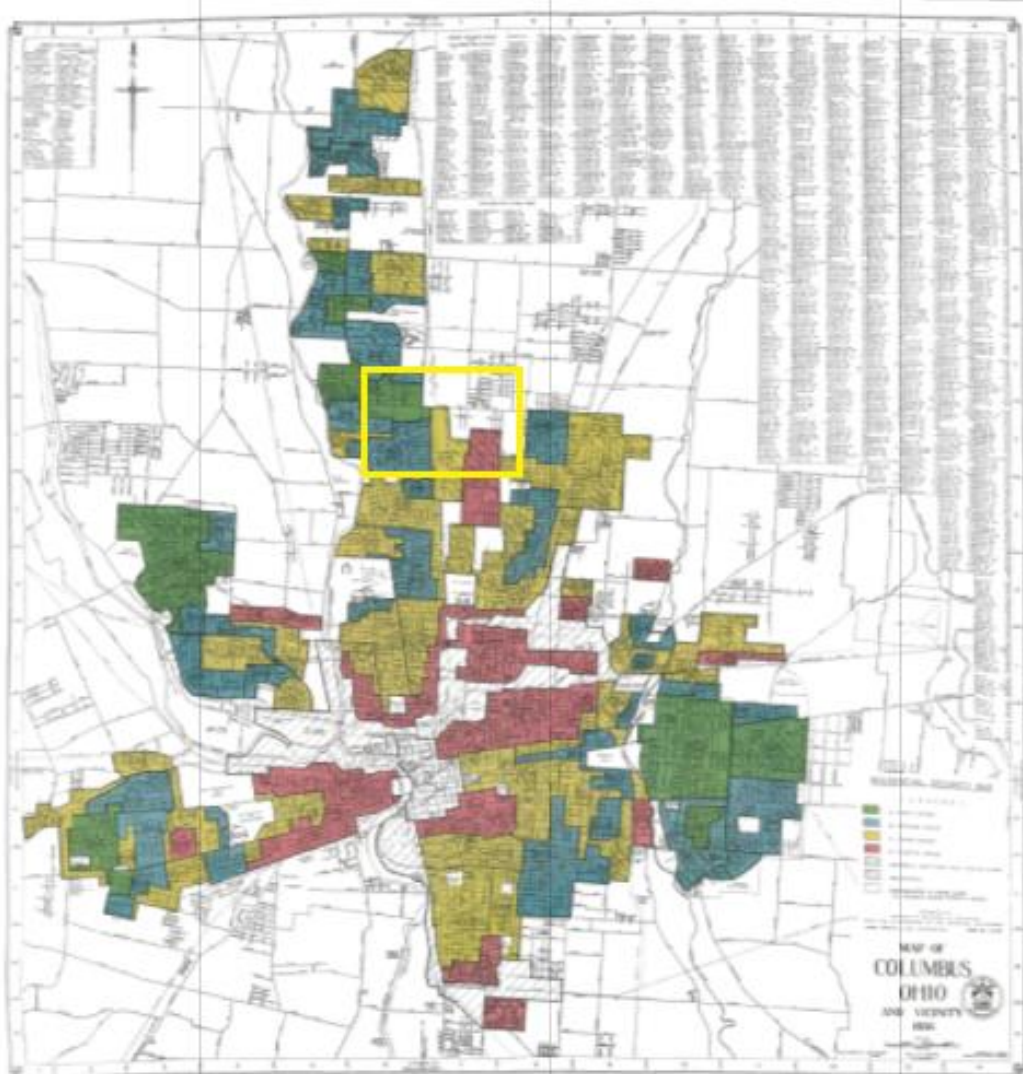
- Overtly racist and discriminatory policy facilitated by a federal agency of the United States government, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), founded in 1933 as part of the New Deal.
- It commissioned “residential security maps” for scores of cities across the country.



Redlining

- The term “redlining” came from how the maps used four colors to depict neighborhoods as belonging to four categories of loan risk:
 - Best (green)
 - Desirable (blue)
 - Declining (yellow)
 - Hazardous (red)

Redlining Example: Columbus, Ohio



- The area outlined in yellow contains two elementary schools with markedly different performance outcomes, which are located in different "school attendance zones."
- These zones were in different neighborhoods on the 1936 HOLC map: one green ("best") and the other yellow and red ("declining" and "hazardous").



Administering Schools In the US

- *School districts*, which are political subdivisions, are typically defined in state law and governed by elected officials.
- Within districts, unelected administrators usually create *school attendance zones*, which are administrative service areas.



Feedback Loops Between Housing Quality and School Quality

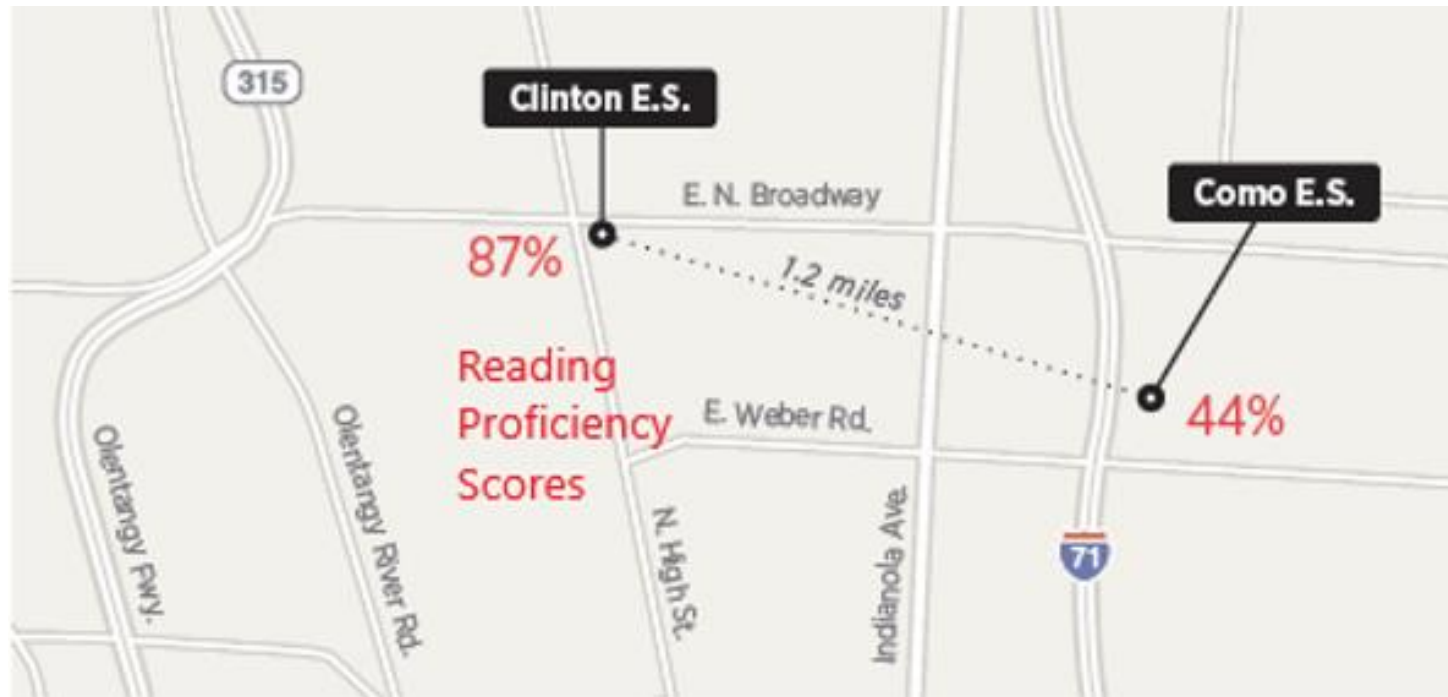
- Affluent parents look for good schools for their children and bid up the price of housing in school attendance zones that have those good schools.
- Parents who cannot afford expensive housing make do with the schools within their school attendance zones.
- What results is a patchwork of school attendance zones with different property values and schools of commensurate quality.



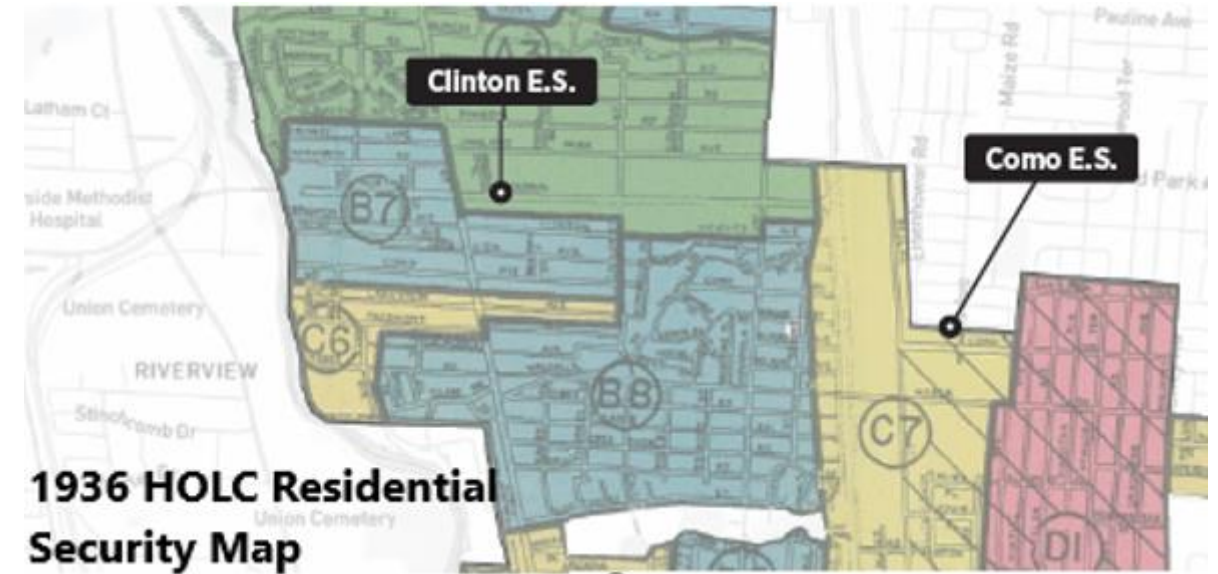
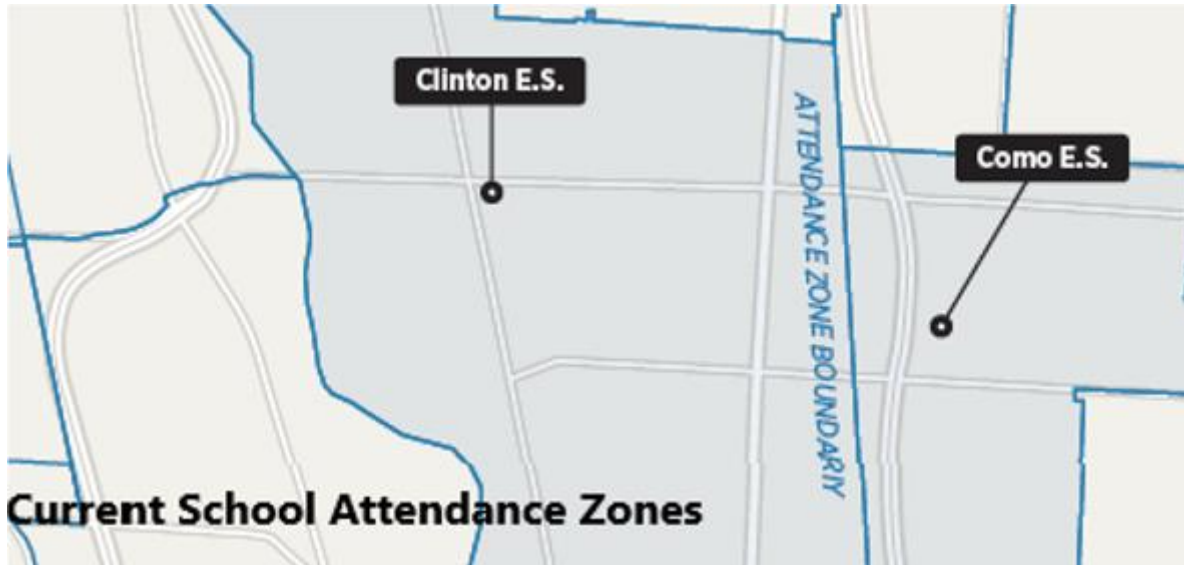
School Attendance Zones and Redlining

- Today's affluent school attendance zones with good schools often are in areas designated green ("best") or blue ("desirable") in the HOLC maps of eighty-five years ago.
- Today's failing schools are often in school attendance zones whose areas were designated yellow ("declining") or red ("hazardous") in those old maps.
- Here, "HOLC A" means formerly green areas and "HOLC D" means formerly red areas

Columbus, OH: Clinton vs Como Elementary Schools



Columbus, OH: Clinton vs Como Elementary Schools



This is just one of several examples from *A Fine Line* (DeRoche, 2020)



Causes of School Performance Gap: Funding?

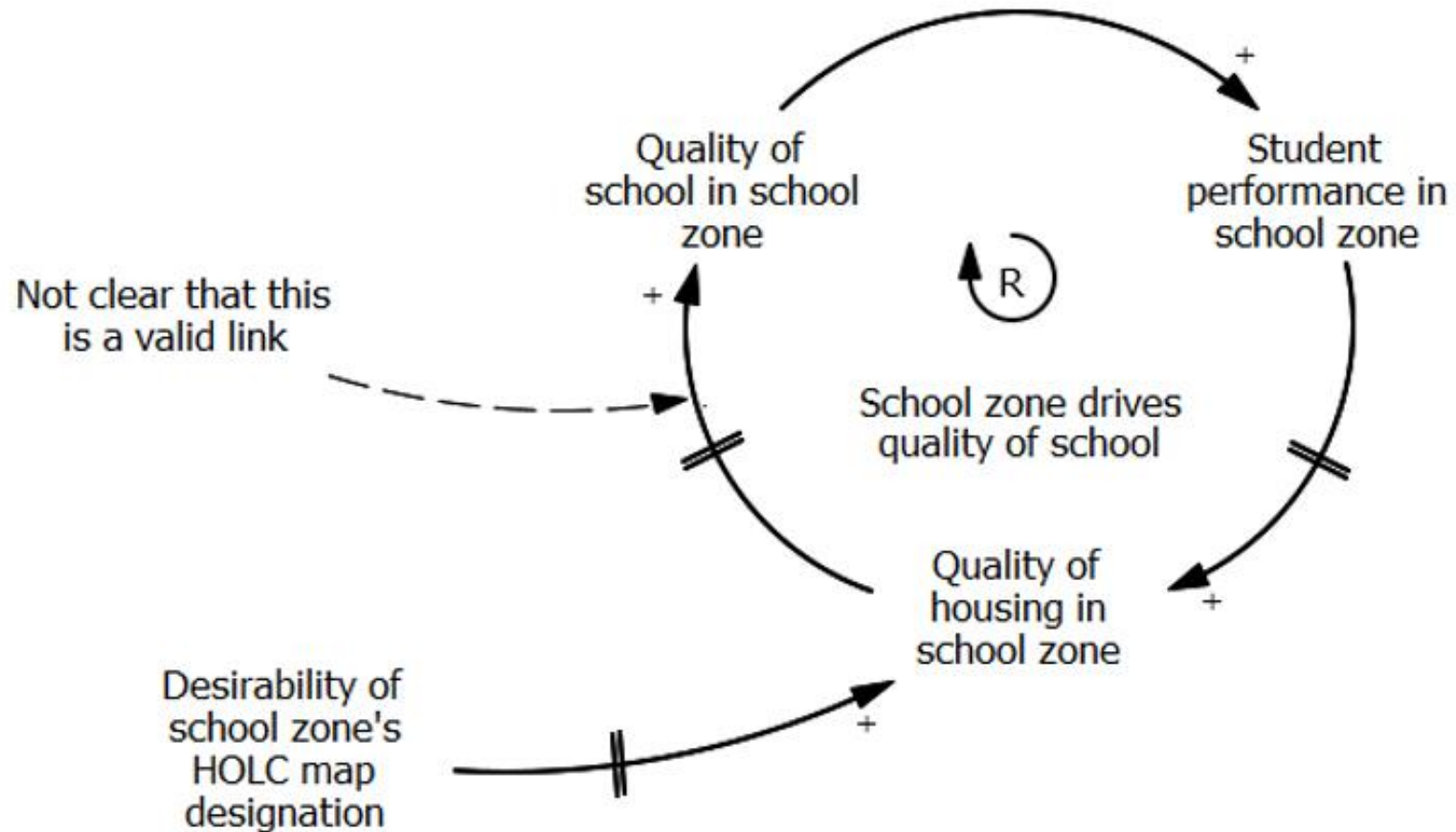
- Revenues in HOLC D school administrative zones were indeed lower than those in HOLC A zones.
- However, because of federal funding provided to HOLC D schools, their expenditures were not statistically significantly different from HOLC A schools.



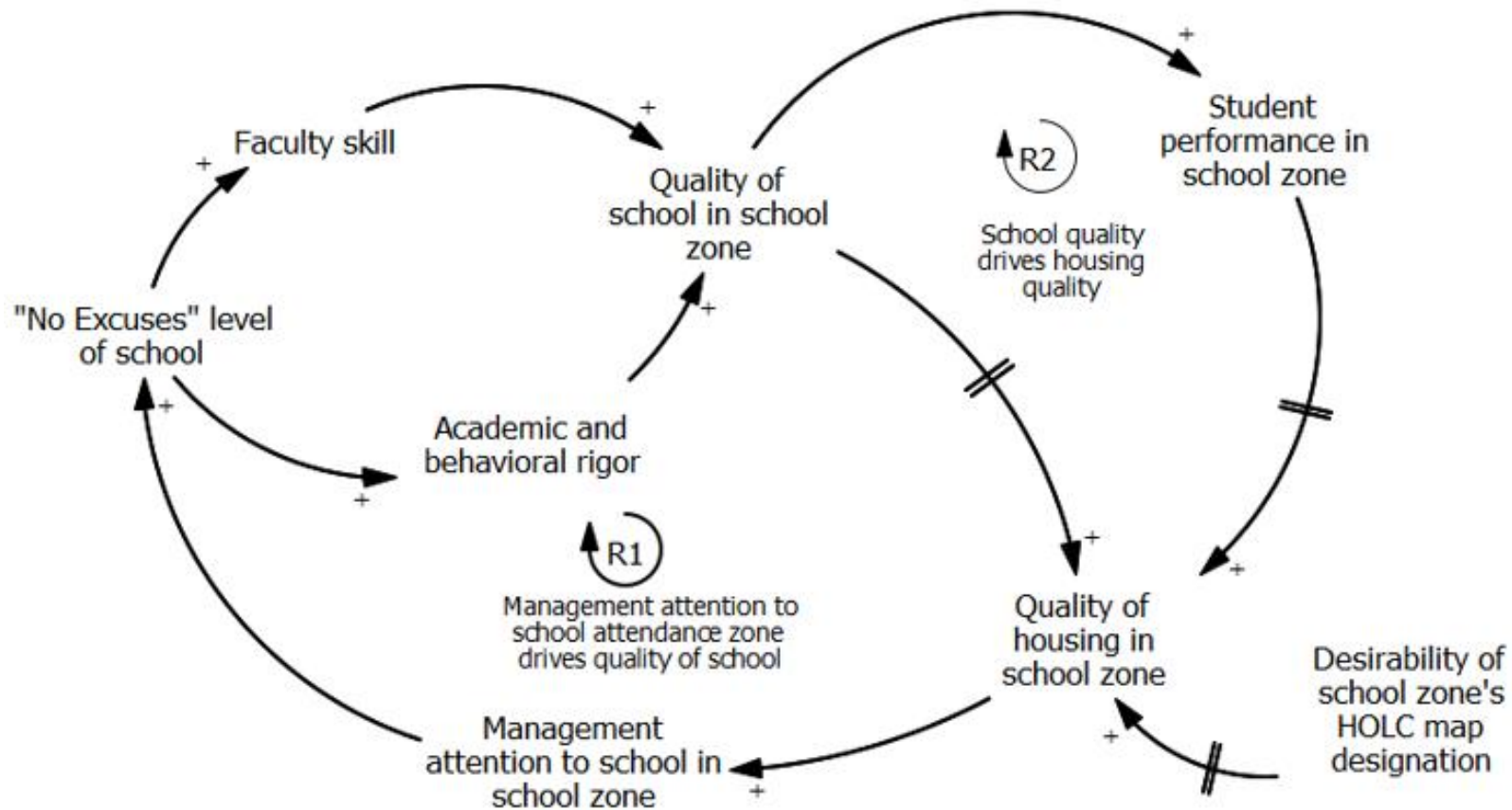
Causes of School Performance Gap: Evidence from Charter Schools

- Research shows that it is possible to design and implement schools that, despite their location in formerly redlined areas, are high performing.
- The key? “No excuses” schools:
 - High expectations for both academics and behavior,
 - Longer school days and years, and
 - Frequent observations by teachers to give feedback, tutoring, and data-driven instruction that uses assessment to frequently update teachers. (Cohodes, 2018: 6)

Conventional Dynamic Hypothesis

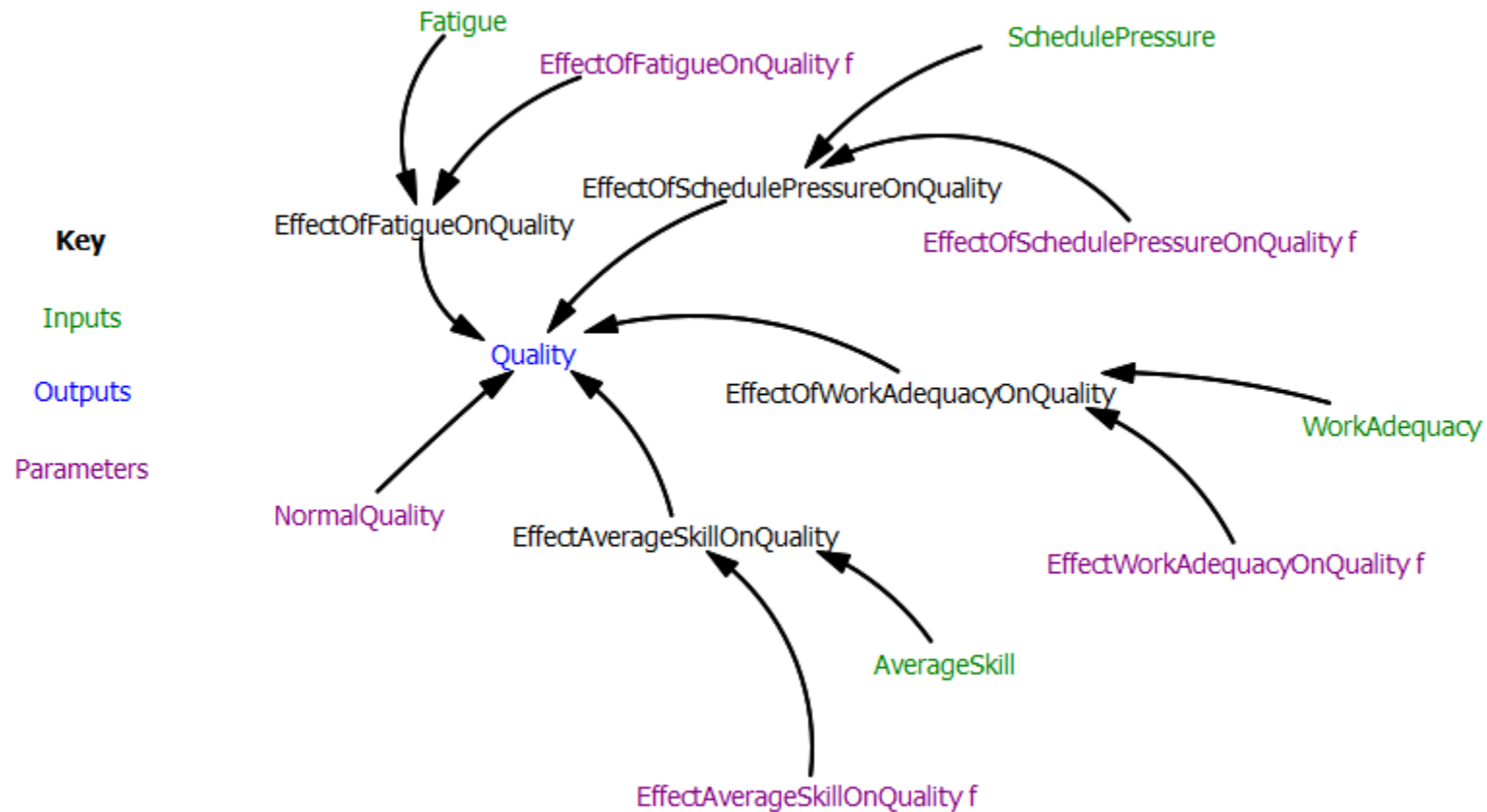


Elaborated Dynamic Hypothesis

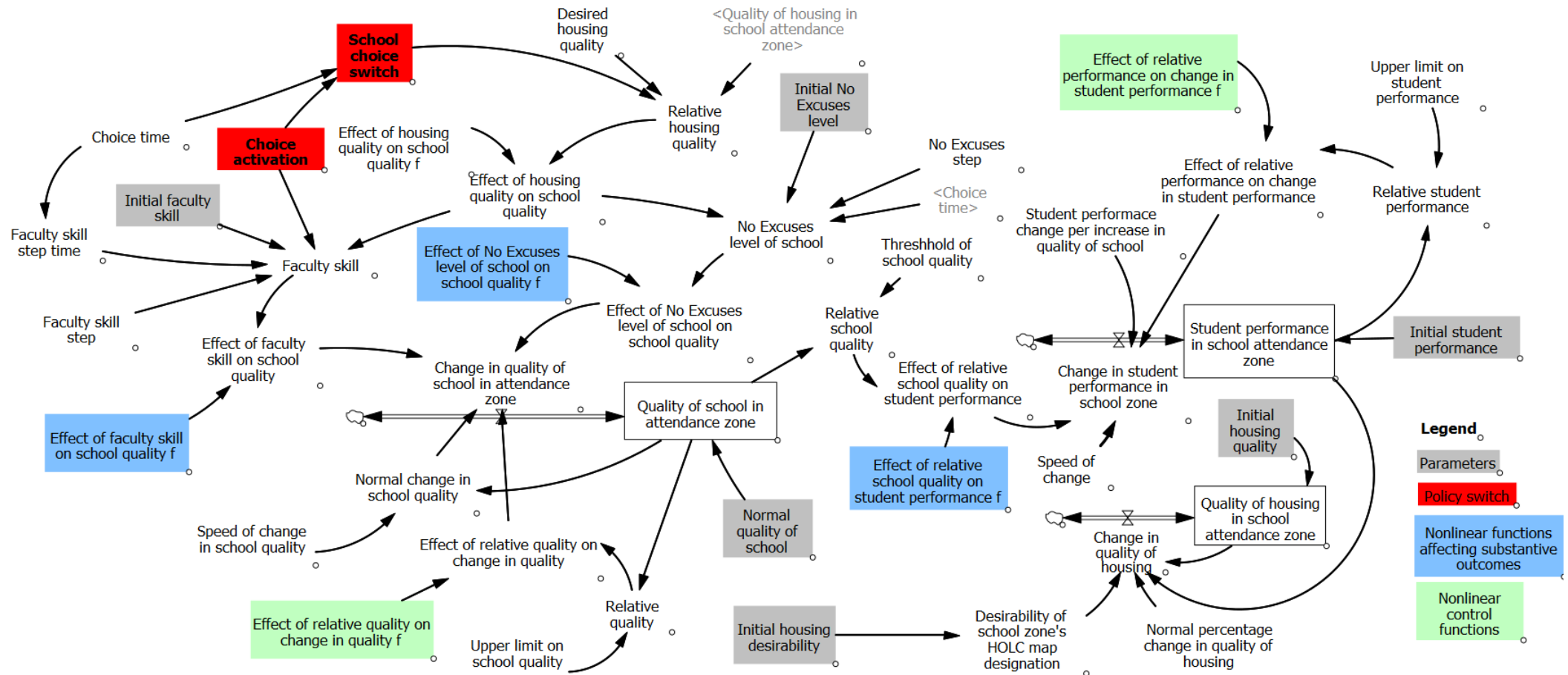


Stock and Flow Model

Based on modified version of Vensim "Quality" molecule:

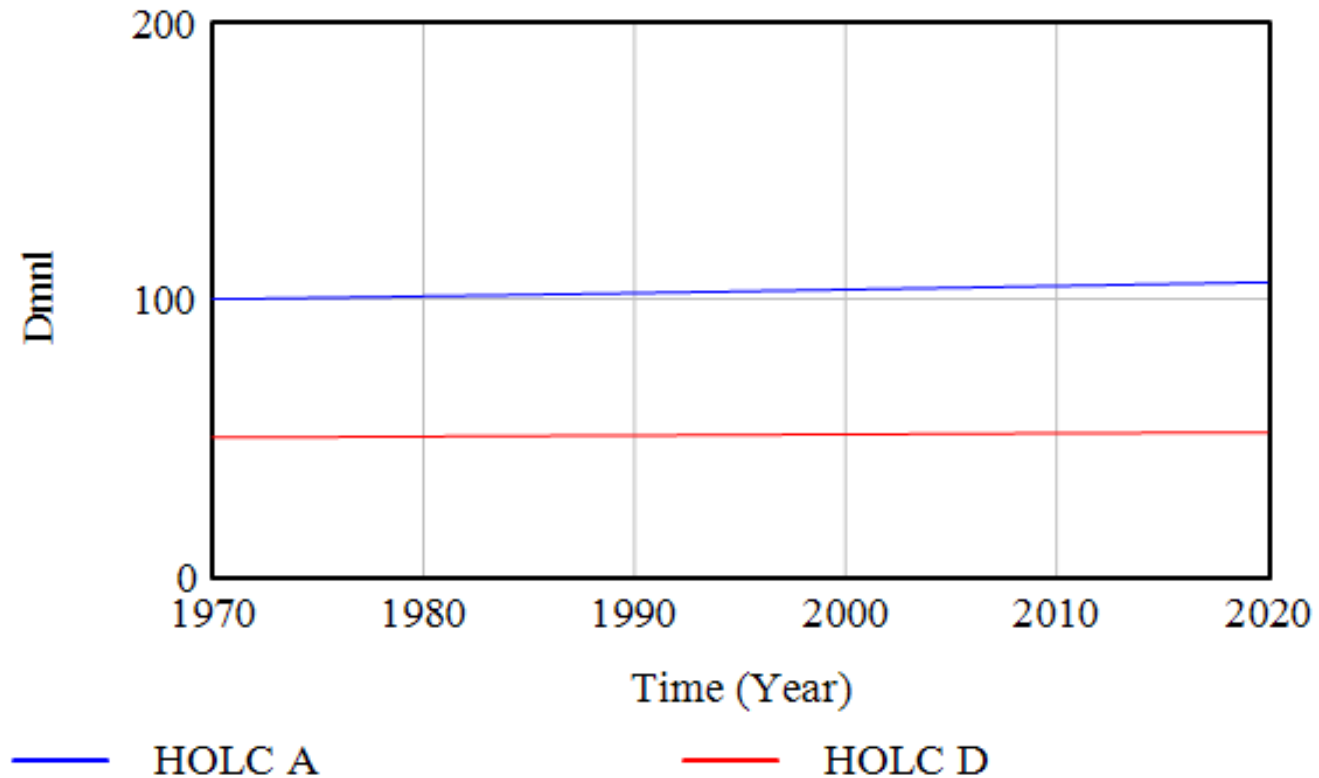


Stock and Flow Model



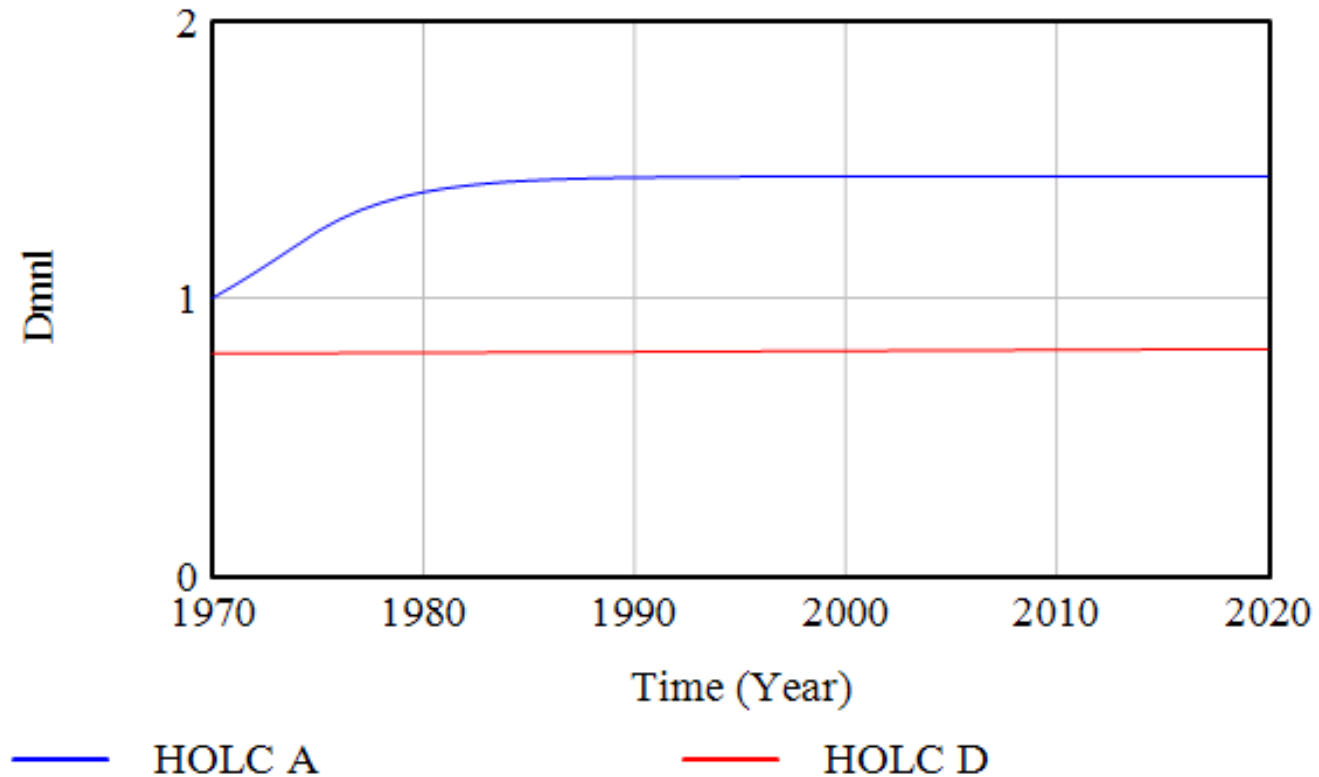
Policy Experiments: Baseline

Housing Quality

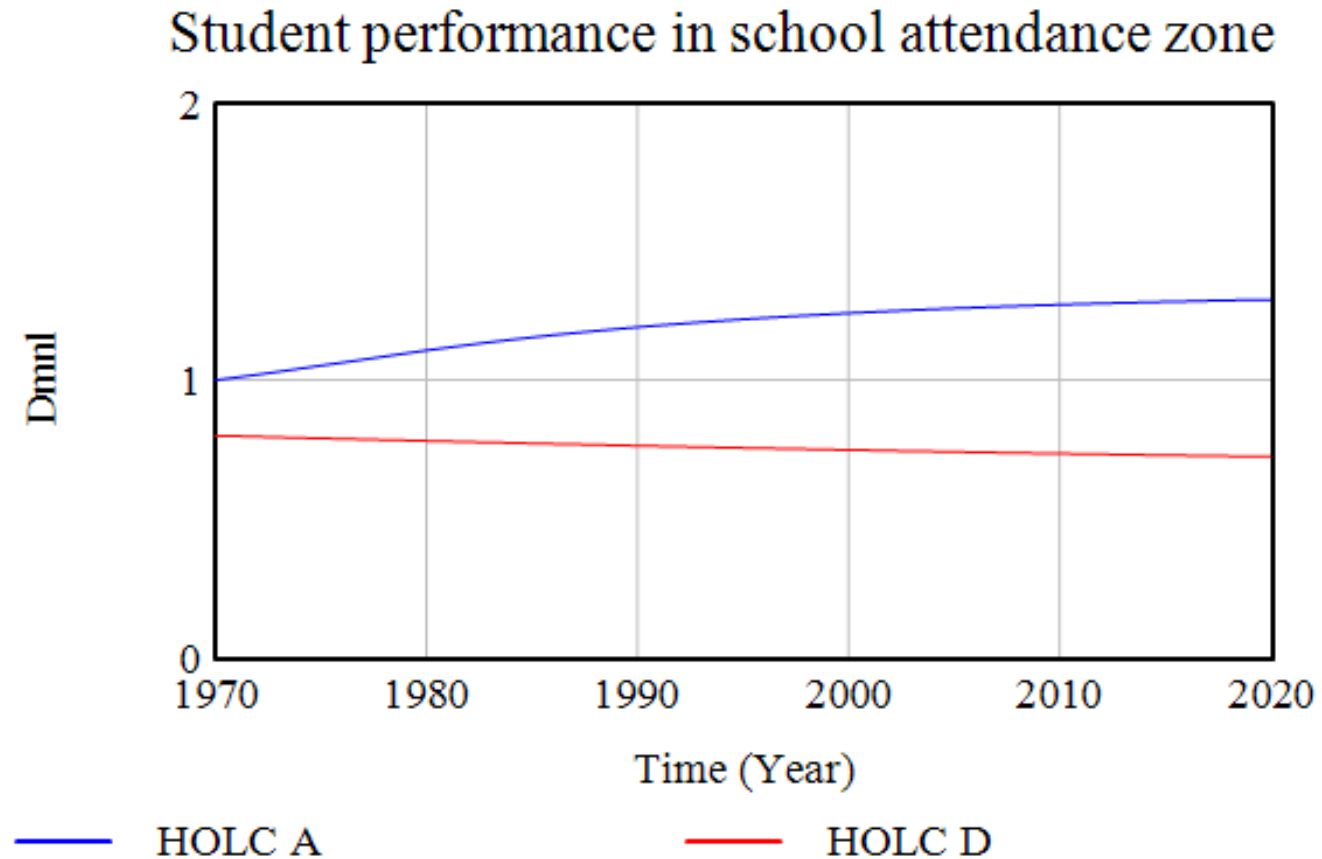


Policy Experiments: Baseline

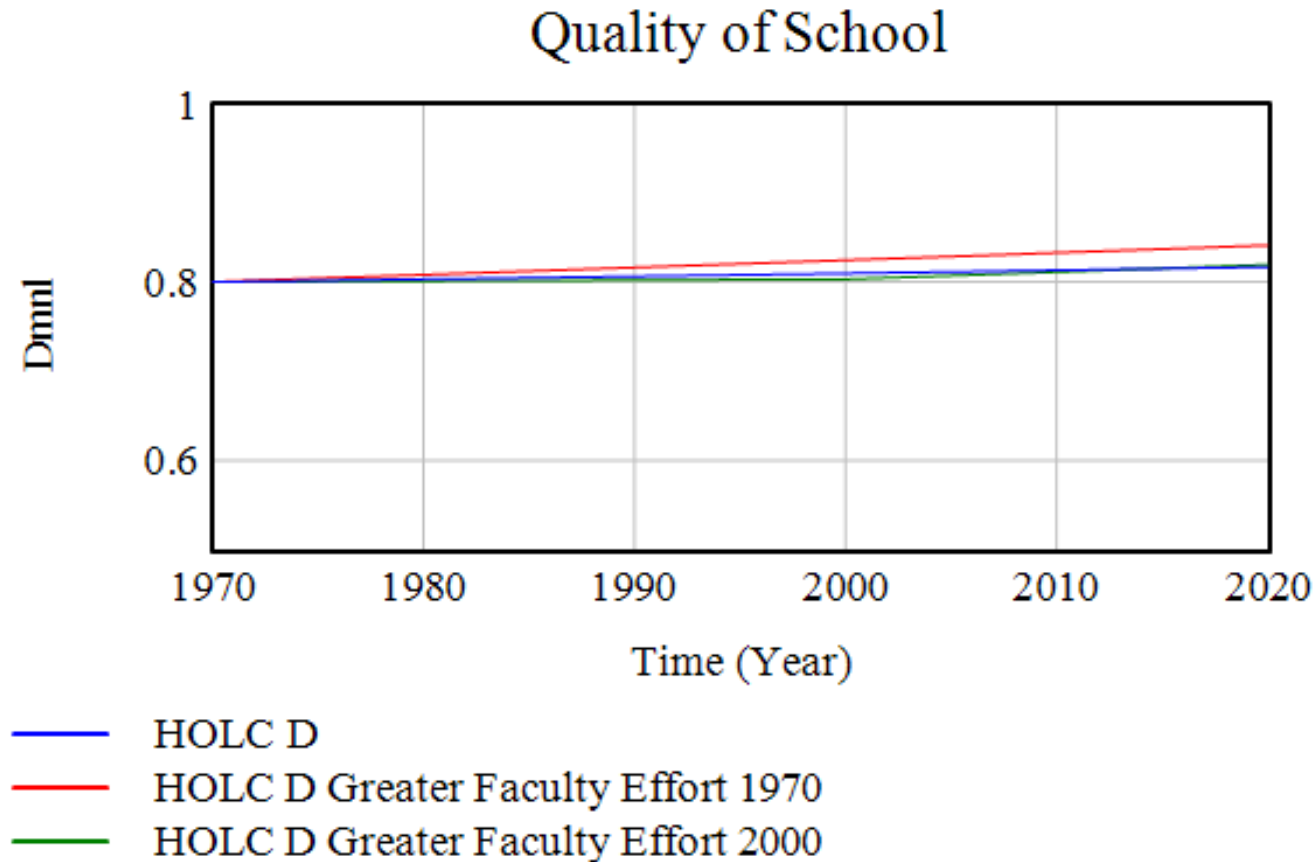
Quality of school in attendance zone



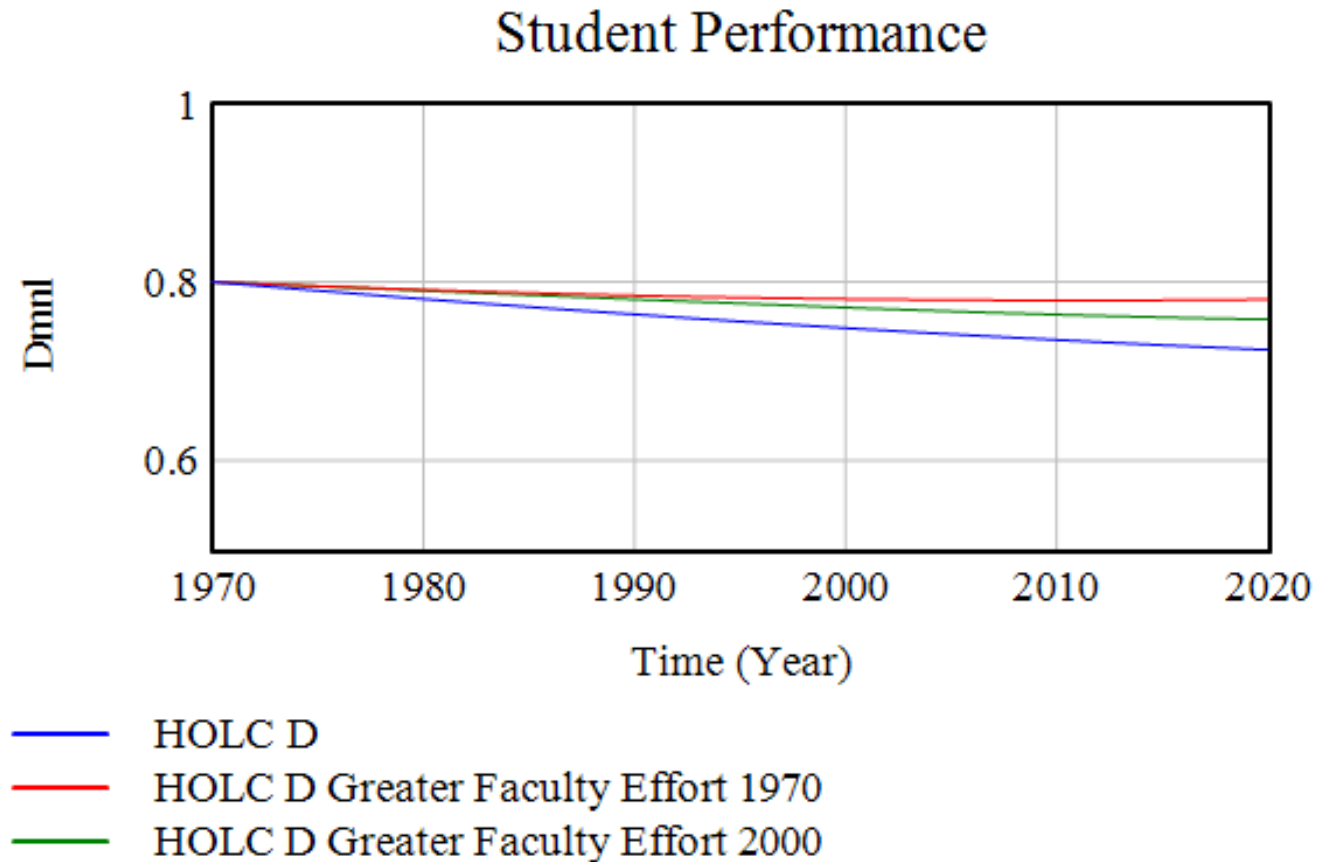
Policy Experiments: Baseline



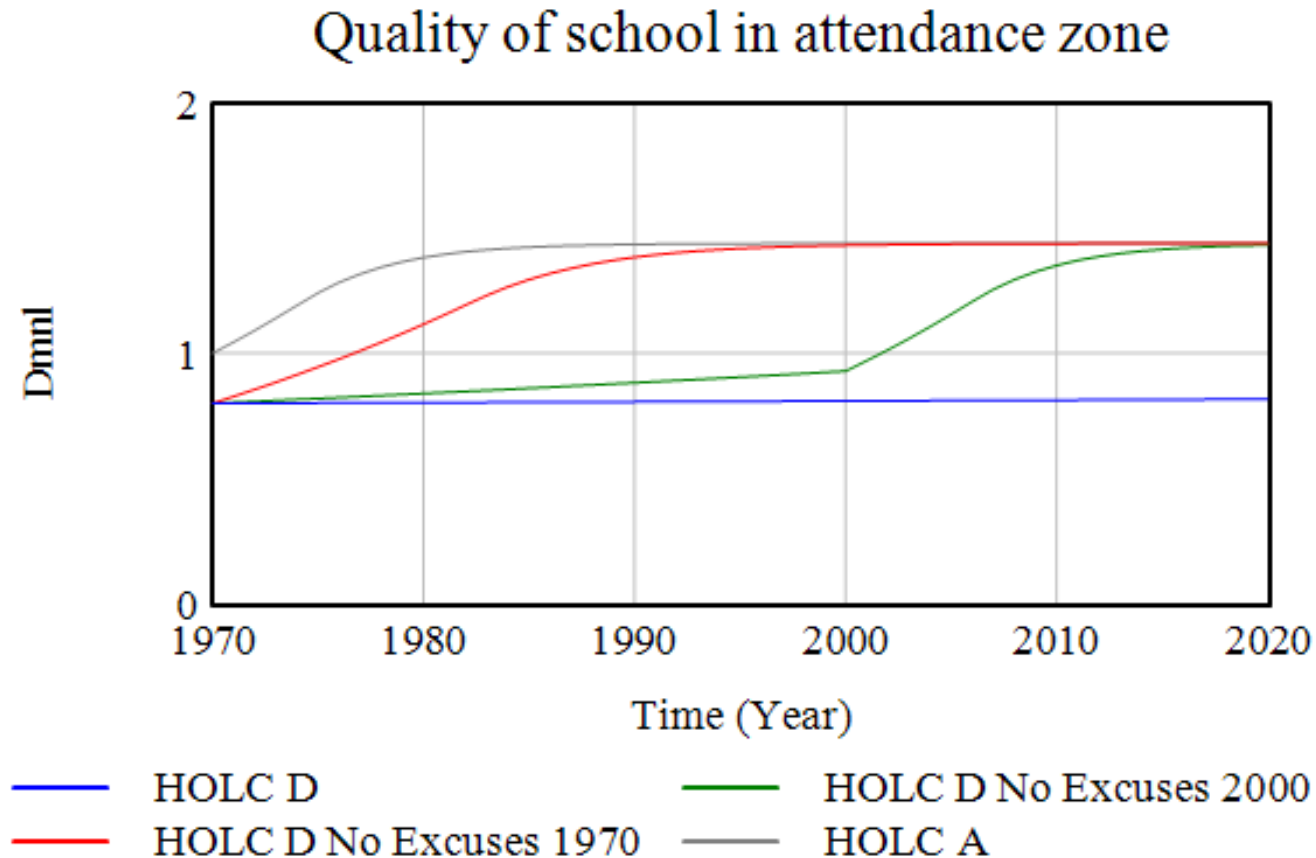
Policy Experiments: Greater Faculty Skill and Effort



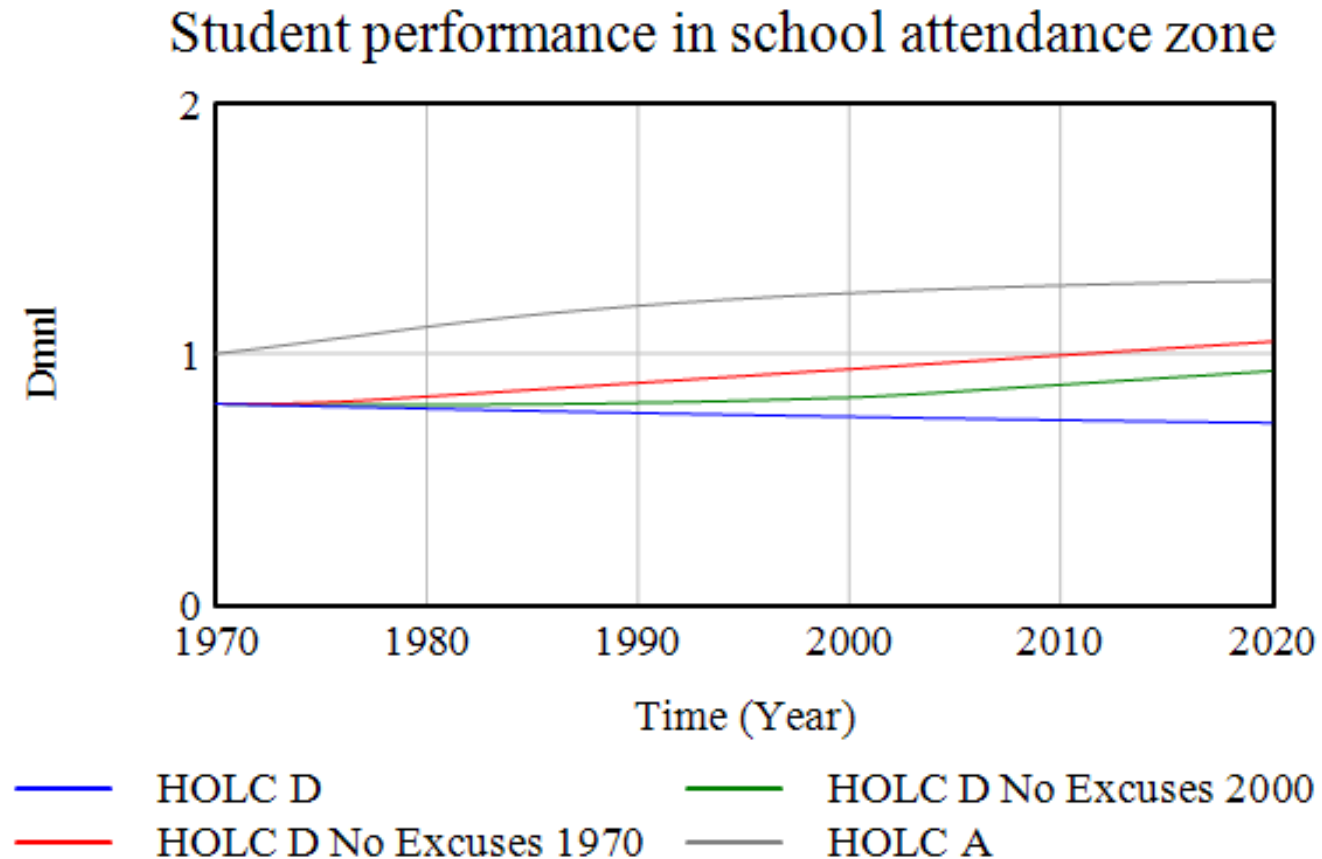
Policy Experiments: Greater Faculty Skill and Effort



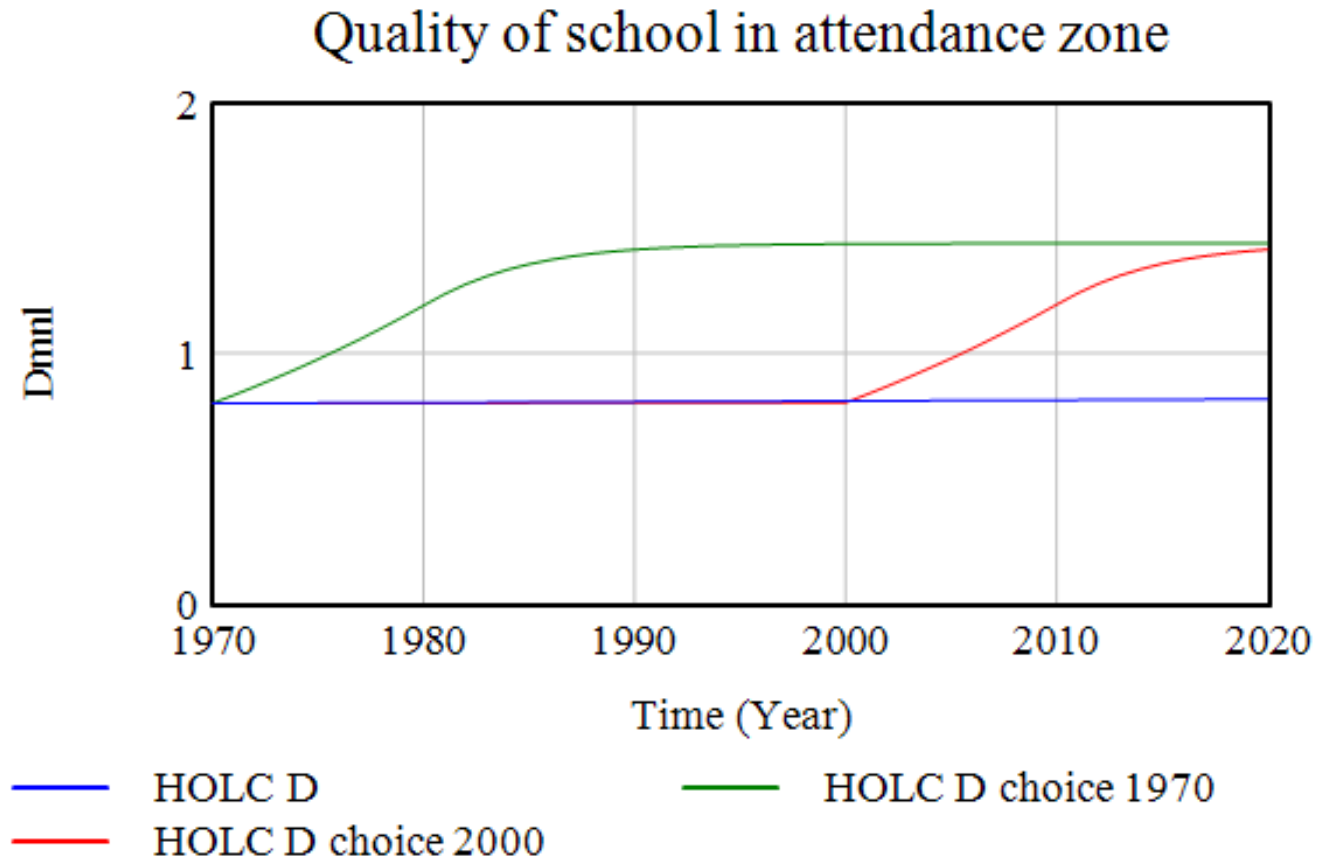
Policy Experiments: "No Excuses" Approach



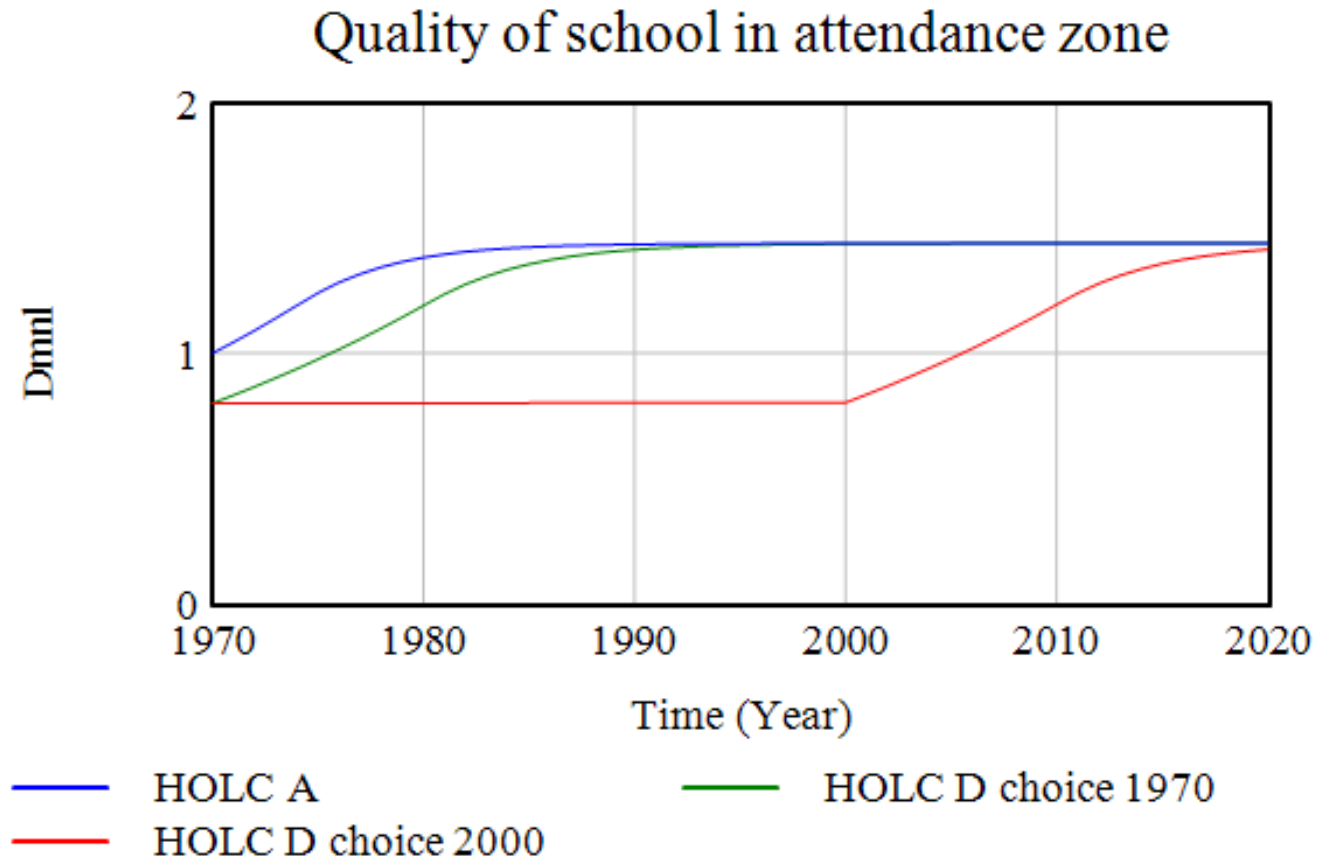
Policy Experiments: "No Excuses" Approach



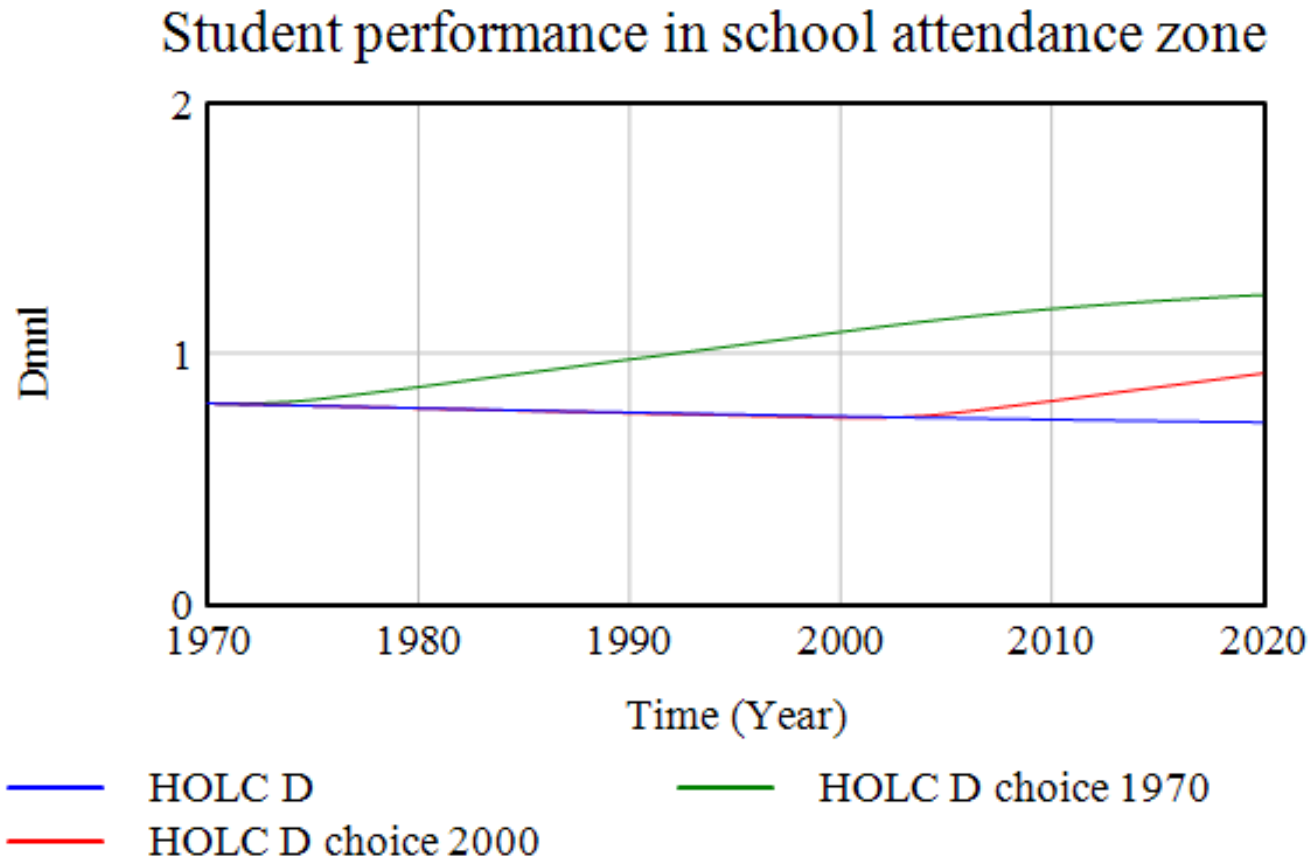
Policy Experiments: School Choice



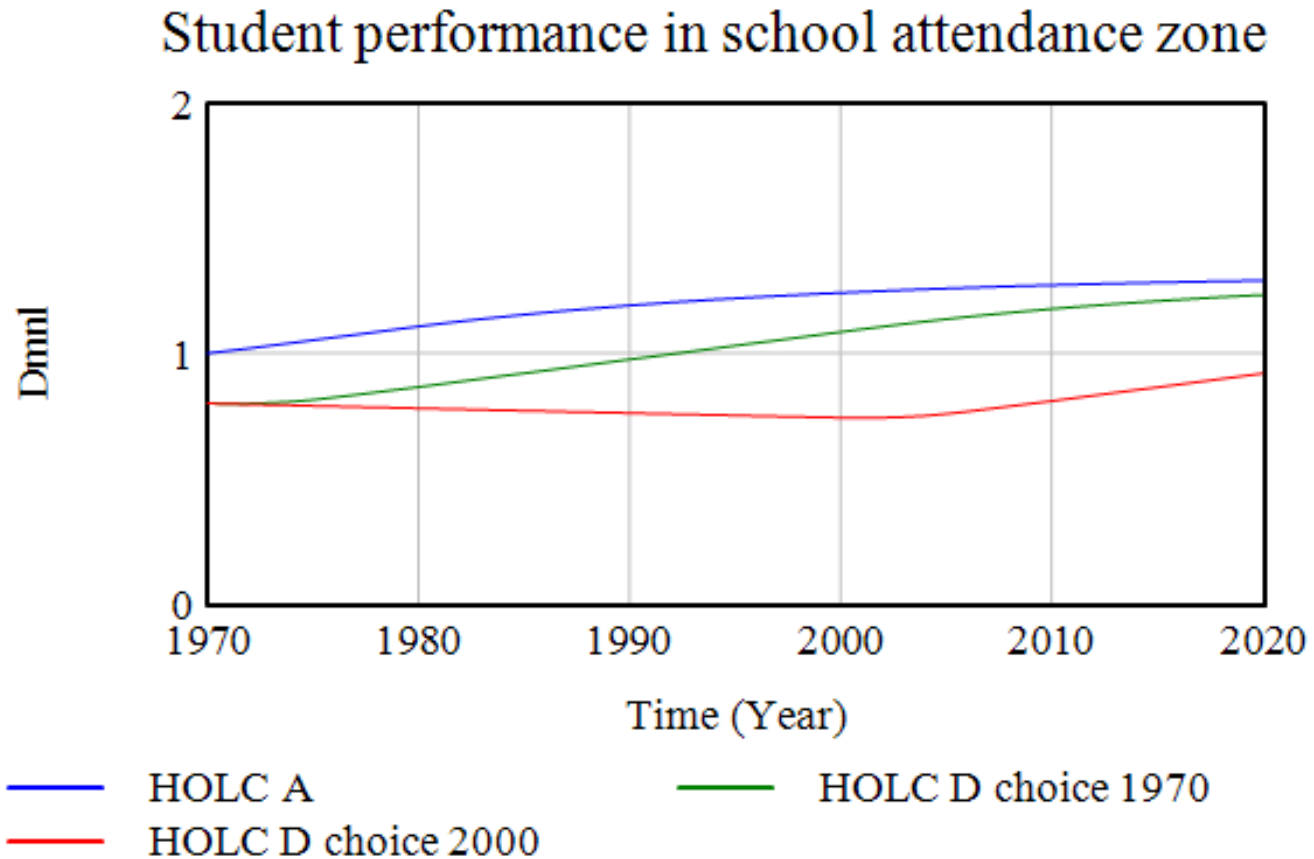
Policy Experiments: School Choice



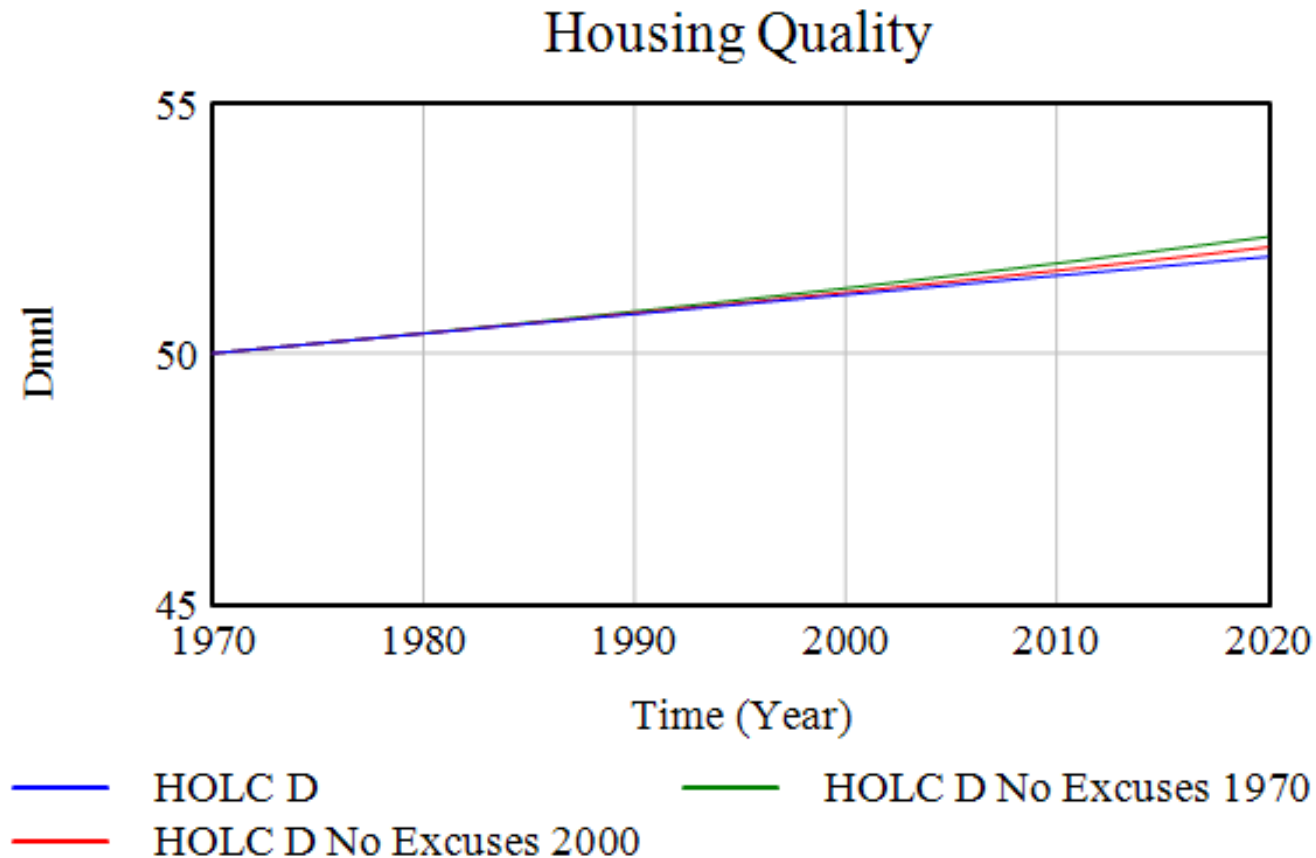
Policy Experiments: School Choice



Policy Experiments: School Choice



Policy Experiments: School Choice's Effect on Housing Quality





Conclusions

- Much evidence has shown that the long-standing practice of redlining, despite being outlawed in 1968, nevertheless has had lingering effects on current conditions.
- Those include housing quality and value itself, but also the quality of schools in those school attendance zones that overlap formerly redlined areas.



Conclusions

- We examined the systemic structure of this situation, positing that it is not the quality of housing, per se, that has led to failing schools.
- They come from the lack of administrative effort to enforce good academic and behavioral standards and to support high effort from faculty.



Conclusions

- The policy experiments in the stylized model used in this paper simulated
 - improved faculty effort alone,
 - improved academic and behavioral conditions (the “no excuses” approach) alone, and
 - a combination of the two.



Conclusions

- The results showed that significant improvements in school quality and in student performance are
 - modest with improved teaching,
 - significant with the “no excuses” approach alone, and
 - high with the combined approach.



Conclusions

- Indeed, the combined approach closed the gap between HOLC A and HOLC D zones in school quality.
- For student performance, the gap remained after implementation of the combined approach, but the trend was in the direction of closing it.
- For some charter schools, in New York City and elsewhere, this combined approach has already closed the quality and performance gaps.