

State Sponsored New White Flight through Public School Choice: Milwaukee's Open Enrollment Program

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Abstract

'White flight' has largely come to mean exit from or avoidance of racially mixed public schools in urban neighborhoods. But the 'new' white flight is complicated by the fact that more whites who are often more affluent remain or relocate to desirable urban areas that are close to jobs and attractive city amenities. This paper describes how white flight can now happen without housing relocation with support from state-wide and municipal school choice policies resulting in the further re-segregation of regional schools. Using the Milwaukee Public School system's Open Enrollment program as a case study, the authors demonstrate that this seemingly politically neutral school choice program supports the new white flight, enabling the children of white families to attend –and subsidize –the region's suburban schools with declining enrollment, while further undermining the financial base of urban public schools. This study confirms earlier research indicating white students comprise the majority of participants in Open Enrollment programs, but with more non-white students participating in the Milwaukee program in the last five years. Extensive qualitative analysis of historical documents served as the primary research method for this study. Implications for other regions are discussed.

Keywords: School Choice, White Flight, Open Enrollment, Public K-12 Schools, Educational Finance

1. Introduction

This paper offers a case study on the continuing evolution of white flight, in which white

families and individuals remain or return to live in urban areas, but send their children to white, affluent suburban schools through state-sponsored open enrollment school choice programs in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It explores this policy's impact on this Midwest urban public school system as a contributing factor in continued high levels of racial segregation of schools in this region. Similar to a scenario Lareau and Goyette (2014, p. 17) proposed as a likely outcome of urban school choice programs on housing selection, the Milwaukee case may be an example where white families "feel more free to enact their ideal residential preferences without concern for schooling quality," and have not contributed to desegregating the local system in which they reside. Furthermore, this paper supports the findings of other recent studies that school choice made by white parents who live in urban environments may contribute to an *increase* in racial segregation in the urban school districts in which they reside (e.g., McDonough Kimelberg & Billingham, 2012).

Racial segregation of schools has long been known to create unequal opportunities for children, and therefore adults (Brown vs Board of Education Topeka Kansas; Orfield & Lee, 2005), and consequently, desegregation remains an important goal to support the educational attainment of minority students. Achievement measured by standardized tests and the quality of teachers continues to be linked directly to the racial composition of schools, with the most favorable results in these areas being in predominantly white schools. When middle class and affluent white families opt out of diverse urban schools and into suburban districts or private schools, these urban schools suffer from a loss of social, cultural, and financial capital (e.g., Kahlenberg, 2001; Small, 2004). These schools, comprised of lower-income students, become more isolated. As Martin Luther King once noted (Orfield & Lee, 2005), all schools and all children lose when schools do not include a mix of diverse students, including homogeneous white schools. Well integrated schools provide the foundation for a multicultural, multi-racial society to flourish. Susan Eaton emphasizes, "Racially diverse schools do far better in terms of short-and long-term achievements for kids, developing critical thinkers and children of color persisting and finding success" (Herbert, 2010, p. 8). Wells, Holme, Atanda and Tijerina Revilla (2005) also found that students attending racially integrated schools were "less racially prejudiced and more comfortable around people of different backgrounds" (p. 2141), even if they eventually lived and worked in highly segregated environments.

Goyette (2008, p. 114) found that "...those who are white, suburban, and middle-income...primarily select schools based on their neighborhoods and residences." If families with adequate financial means find they are not satisfied with the quality of local infrastructure, such as public schools, they are in a better position to move to neighborhoods with better services than are low-income families. The ability to choose residences is typically associated with high satisfaction with school quality (Falbo, Glover, Holcombe & Stokes, 2005). In the United States, more affluent Whites typically have more access to geographic mobility than their low-income peers of color. For decades, the general rule of thumb has been that affluent and middle class whites moved to the suburbs to access better amenities such as schools, which is also known as white flight (e.g., Logan, Oakley, & Stowell, 2008).

1.1 A Brief History of White Flight

White flight was first defined in the 1950s as the large-scale geographical migration of white individuals and families from central cities and metropolitan areas to new housing in the more affluent, racially homogenous white suburban towns and neighborhoods. According to Frey (1978), white flight occurred due to changes in the economy, as companies sought cheaper or newer facilities in the suburbs, the building of highway transportation infrastructure, the availability of new housing stock that was frequently earmarked through redlining for whites, and supported through public policy measures such as the GI bill, which resulted in more racially homogenous – and white – suburban schools. White flight initially involved upper-class whites, whose abandonment of urban neighborhoods took a significant toll on the local tax base (Kerner Commission, 1968) including the subsequent erosion of critical social services, such as public school infrastructure. White flight increased sharply during the 1970s, and was largely a middle class phenomenon. Class and color divides are not always clear cut, however, and a considerable number of middle class African American families also left urban areas during this same time period (Wilson, 1987). However, *white* middle class flight during the 1970s is often attributed to policies designed to desegregate public schools, which may have indirectly served to encourage more whites to move to the suburbs to avoid integrating their children in urban schools, especially in large metropolitan areas with large African American populations (Clotfelter, 2001; Frey, 1978; Henry & Hankins, 2012). A few researchers (e.g., Rossell, 1975) challenged this assumption, and indicated in the early days of desegregation, there were no noticeable differences in the number of whites relocating to the suburbs from places that had explicit desegregation policies and proactive plans to implement them, and those that did not, but it is widely acknowledged that in the face of national school desegregation policies, white flight effectively served to resegregate many urban public schools (Bell, 2004; Falbo et al., 2005; Orfield & Lee, 2004). Pulido (2000) describes these historical processes of suburbanization and urban decentralization as contributing factors to contemporary environmental racism, where high-demand goods and services, such as quality schools, ‘follow’ the residential patterns of affluent and middle class whites.

1.2 A Modern Variation on White Flight: White Urban In-fill

Today, the term ‘white flight’ nearly always refers to the spatial shift of whites to the geographic areas they consider desirable, in terms of amenities such as access to better performing, less racially mixed schools (Clotfelter, 2001). But the ‘new’ white flight is complicated by the “back-to-the-city movement,” what Piiparinen (2013) described as “white infill,” which involves affluent whites remaining or relocating to desirable urban areas that are close to jobs and the attractive amenities of city living. Piiparinen (2013, p. 1) argued:

...the people of means wanting to be in cities is largely the same people who always had means, and they are simply taking their means from one geography to the next; that is, from the suburban development to the urban enclave.

Piiparinen (2013) indicates that it remains unclear if this new gentrification resulted in gains for the rest of the city residents, in terms of infrastructure improvements or economic

opportunities. In a 20-year study in Chicago, Piiparinen (ibid) found that gentrification, largely a process of affluent whites locating in urban areas, created new affluent enclaves within city limits rather than resulting in greater racial and economic class integration of residents (ibid). While there is evidence that some white and affluent families are choosing more frequently to send their children to a select number of charter and ‘boutique’ schools specifically marketed to them within urban areas (e.g., Cucchiara, 2013; Possey-Maddox, 2014), it is clear that a significant number of these newer residents continue to opt out of diverse public schools and send their children to more affluent, predominantly white K-12 schools outside of city limits. A variety of school-related public policy initiatives support the desires of these parents, and these policies have implications for racial integration in schools (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013).

The authors acknowledge there are many intertwined, but distinct forces at work that favor transforming public education into a private good through a complex neoliberal, which includes the role of private foundations and benefactors, the promotion of faith-based schools, parent choice, etcetera (Lipman, 2011). This paper focuses some school choice policies.

1.3 The Rationale for School Choice Policies

The stated intent of school choice policies such as charter schools, and open enrollment is to improve education by empowering parents as “citizen-consumers” (Schneider et al., 1997) to choose the best schools for their children. By doing so, “choice” as part of the free market, puts pressure on public schools to have competitive test scores and other indicators of excellence to attract students. Through open enrollment, for example, lower-income families would be given the same opportunities to choose schools for their children, as affluent families have always done. This strategy presumes that parents will make decisions based on more or less objective understandings of what constitutes the best schools, (Note 1) and that the schools not “chosen” will also improve because school personnel will be more motivated to perform better. Proponents of school choice argue that these policies will reduce school inequalities over time (Goyette, 2008).

However, there is evidence that school choice programs have resulted in racial segregation of schools. Renzulli & Evans (2005) conclude that school choice programs that promote publicly funded charter schools cater largely to affluent whites living in urban areas and serve to effectively segregate the public school population by race. Charter schools situated near predominantly minority neighborhoods may draw more from those student populations (Gulosino & Entremont, 2011), but it is clear that charter schools replicate or increase patterns of racial segregation in schools (Frankenberg & Lee, 2003).

Open enrollment policies also appear to encourage a new variation of white flight and racial segregation (Boyd, 2013; Orfield & Luce, 2013). In practice, open enrollment is an inter-district and intra-district transfer policy among participating school districts. While all students have the option of transferring to the school of their choice, open enrollment programs do not usually include access to transportation or funds to offset transportation costs, therefore limiting the participation for many low-income urban families who may not be able to pay those costs (Bonds, Sandy & Farmer-Hinton, 2015). Open enrollment

supports the ‘new’ white flight or “white in-fill” described by Piiparinen (2013) because it allows wealthier families to live in urban areas but maintain the option to send their children to more affluent suburban – and usually predominantly white school districts–rather than enrolling them in diverse city schools or private schools, largely on the urban taxpayers’ dime. A study by the University of Minnesota found that white families were more likely to participate in the Twin City’s open enrollment program. Overall they found that this program increased racial segregation in the participating schools in the region from the years 2000-2010 (Boyd, 2013; Orfield & Luce, 2013).

This paper considers the impact of some school choice policies on the Milwaukee region, and centers focus on the historical evolution and impact of the Milwaukee Public School System’s 220 School Choice program over a 30-year time period, along with the introduction of the Open Enrollment program here. Milwaukee is one of the most racially and economically segregated cities in the US, and one of the most innovative, in terms of the adaptation of school choice policies (Bonds et al., 2015). This paper contributes to our understanding of the impact of particular choice policies in this region and points to implications for other regions in the country adapting similar choice policies. First, using a historical case study approach, we examine the broader issues impacting Milwaukee Public Schools prior to, and during the 30-year history of the Chapter 220 program. These issues include broad demographic and economic trends, deindustrialization, Milwaukee’s high level of urban poverty, hyper-segregation, Milwaukee specific White urban infill, and, geographic school choice, and private school choice. Second, this paper presents high-level aggregated data about the MPS 220 program, showing the costs of the program, population trends in MPS, and year-by-year racial trends in the 220 Open Enrollment Program for a 16-year period from 1998-2014. Finally, a discussion is offered examining the implications and limitations of this study, potential areas for future research, and policy implications that may be drawn from this work.

2. Methods

This study used a mixed methods approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), involving both an extensive case study qualitative analysis of historical documents using primary and secondary source material as evidence (Bowen, 2009; Thies, 2002), and, using enrollment data provided by the Milwaukee Public School system, a quantitative analysis of the Milwaukee area’s 220 program over a 30-year time period, and the use of the area’s Open Enrollment Program by different racial groups across a 16-year year period.

2.1 Qualitative Methods

Regardless of the methods used, there is controversy about how generalizable any social science research can be (e.g., Firestone 1993; Thomas, 2011). While the authors agree that no form of research is bias-free (Firestone, 1993), historical analysis of selected documents for a case study is particularly good at shedding light on events and processes occurring over a significant duration when they are checked against primary sources to minimize bias (Thies, 2002). This case study analyzed a variety of archived public records (e.g., financial, enrollment) and other primary and secondary sources, including reports from the Milwaukee

Public Schools (MPS), newspaper articles, books, district-level program reports, and government documents. Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships (Patton, 1990), and the value of a case study is that it strives to offer insight into the unique experiences of one phenomenon. The case study method allowed researchers to provide a detailed examination of the impact that the Open Enrollment Program (OEP) has on the Milwaukee Public school (MPS) System district, and to a lesser extent on some suburban districts, from the inception of the program in 1998-1999 to the 2013-2014 academic year.

2.2 Quantitative Methods

Next, we examined 1) the available data descriptive statistics available for MPS student body by racial or ethnic category from 1974-2014) the percent of OEP students who were white versus other racial/ethnic categories over the course of the program from 1998-2014; and finally, 3) we tested the proportion of white versus non-white students in the OEP program using Chi-square tests for proportion for each school year the program was in existence.

While some aspects of the Open Enrollment program may be unique to Milwaukee, this case can point to broader trends in school choice programs across the United States, and can help inform the development of guidelines for policy makers and researchers so that choice programs might be made equitable by race in the future.

3. Historical Context of Study: Milwaukee's Demographic and Economic Trends

Drops in population accompanied by increases in the poverty rate due to deindustrialization, and intense segregation create a challenging landscape in which to educate Milwaukee's children. During this study period (1976-2013), the City of Milwaukee experienced major demographic changes. The total city population declined from 637,392 in 1950 to 594,833 in 2010, a drop of -7.1% over 60 years. Despite this overall decrease, the city's African-American population grew from 20,454 (3.21% of total population) in 1950 to 224,258 (40.3%) in 2010 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1960-2010). See Table 1.

Table 1. City of Milwaukee population 1970-2010

Year	Total Population	# Blacks	% of Population
1960	741,324	62,458	8.43%
1970	717,099	105,088	14.65%
1980	636,295	147,036	23.1%
1990	628,088	191,255	30.5%
2000	576,973	234,247	39.2%
2006	563,079	222,999	39.6%
2010	594,833	237,933	40.0%

Source: United States Department of Commerce Bureau of Census (1960; 1970-2010).

3.1 Deindustrialization

Much of Milwaukee's population decline can be attributed to the loss of a large portion of its industrial base due to deindustrialization. Beginning in the late 1960s, companies started closing, merging and relocating to other local communities, states and countries. Milwaukee witnessed the loss of major industries such as its breweries, toolmaking facilities, and tanneries, including Miller Brewery, Schlitz Brewery, Pabst Brewery, A.O. Smith, and Harnischfeger, which located to places where there were cheaper labor costs, no unions, and few if any taxes (Gurda, 2006; Orum, 1995). Between 1960-1973, Milwaukee lost 42,000 manufacturing jobs. During the late 1970s and 1980s, Milwaukee lost 27,500 high paying manufacturing jobs, while gaining 19,000 low-paying service jobs (Binkley & White, 1991). The portion of manufacturing jobs in Milwaukee dropped from 42 percent to 23 percent during the period 1950-1990 (Orum, 1995).

3.2 Poverty

As a result of the loss of these high paying jobs, the city of Milwaukee has consistently ranked as one of the poorest cities in American during this study period. During recent history, poverty has deepened significantly here. In 2001, Milwaukee was the 17th poorest city in the US, and moved to the 12th poorest in 2002, and 7th poorest city in the nation by 2003 (Schultze, 2003, September). In 2004, 41.3% of Milwaukee children lived in poverty, the fourth highest in the nation (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 2005, August 31). In 2007, over 26% of Milwaukeeans lived in poverty, and the city had the seventh highest poverty rate 24.4%. By 2010, Milwaukee was again considered the 4th poorest city in the nation, with 27% of Milwaukee residents living in poverty, comprised of an estimated 158,245 people (Glauber & Poston, 2010, September 28).

This trend has meant that more children enrolled in the Milwaukee Public School system were impacted by the deleterious impacts of poverty and met the criteria for low socio-economic status through free and reduced lunch participation than ever before. One in three children in the city lived in poverty in 2008 (Glauber & Poston, 2008). This poverty rate was exceeded by only three other cities: Detroit (36.4%), Cleveland (35%) and Buffalo (28.8%).

3.3 Hyper-Segregation

Milwaukee has been ranked as one of the most racially segregated cities in America for decades, and since 2013, it has been considered the most racially segregated city in America (Jacobs, Kiersz & Lubin, 2013). In the 1970s, Eisinger (1976, p. 43) noted that Milwaukee was the 10th most segregated city in America in 1970. In 1970, over 70,000 African Americans lived in neighborhoods that were 90% of African American. By 1986, Milwaukee ranked first of the largest 50 cities in the percentage of African Americans living in racially segregated neighborhoods, with approximately 97.5% of African Americans in Milwaukee lived in racially segregated neighborhoods (McNeely & Kinlow, 1987, p. 141-142). Massey and Denton (1989) employed 1980 census data, using five indicators to measure levels of segregation (evenness, exposure, clustering, centralization and concentration) for the nation's

largest metropolitan areas, and found Milwaukee to be one of six cities (including Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia) to have high segregation scores on all five measures. They termed those communities "hyper-segregated" (Massey & Denton, 1989, p. 382). By 1990, most African Americans lived in neighborhoods that were over 80% black (Hughes, 1993), a trend which continues today.

4. School Desegregation: Context of Traditional and 'New' White Flight in Milwaukee

While white flight from the urban Milwaukee core reflected national trends in general (Henry & Hankins, 2012), white flight from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) picked up steam in the 1970s as a result of federal court mandated school desegregation within the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), mirroring the experiences of other metropolitan areas undergoing desegregation efforts, such as Boston, Saint Louis, Minneapolis, and other mid-size and large cities (e.g., Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). The original lawsuit charging MPS with racial segregation of students started in 1965. Attorney Lloyd Barbee filed a suit, known as *Amos vs. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee* (1965), with segregation of MPS based on race. Included in the charges were segregation of faculty, intact bussing, overcrowding, neighborhood attendance policy, and so forth. These conditions were believed to have contributed to the low academic performance of African American students in MPS (Dahlk, 2010, Jones, 1980; Jones, 2009, Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993).

Prior to the filing of the federal lawsuit, Blacks in Milwaukee protested the racially segregated conditions of the MPS for several years starting in the early 1960s. The protest included boycotts and marches by the black community and civil rights organizations National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Milwaukee United for School Integration Committee (MUSIC), (Dahlk, 2010, Jones, 1980; Jones, 2009; Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993). The federal court (Eastern District of Wisconsin) finally heard the case in 1973, eight years from its initial filing in 1965. Federal Judge John Reynolds issued a ruling on January 19, 1976 stating that MPS had intentionally segregated the schools based on race and that MPS must desegregate them (ibid).

4.1 Whites 'Stay Put' Through One-Way Busing

When the federal court case settled in 1979 after several years of appeals by MPS, white flight from MPS increased during the 1980s and 1990s, as it did throughout the country at this time (e.g., Orfield & Lee, 2005). It took several forms in Milwaukee. Busing of students was part of this settlement, and Black students in MPS bore the disproportionate burden of busing for desegregation. In 1978, the first year of busing in Milwaukee, 72% of the MPS students bused were African Americans (Orfield & Lee, 2005). By 1980, 90% of the students bused in Milwaukee to promote desegregation were African Americans (ibid). White students were allowed to remain at their neighborhood schools or attend black schools that offered specialty programs that drew a large number of white students. This one-way busing led to opposition and criticism by the Black community and their allies demanding changes in MPS' busing policy because white students were not being bused as much as black students (Dahlk, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Jones, 1980; Jones, 2009; Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993).

4.2 White Flight through Magnet and Specialty Schools

White families removed their children from diverse schools in several ways. First, in an effort to avoid enrolling their children in schools that might receive an influx of Black students, many white students fled their majority white schools to attend newly created magnet and specialty schools that attracted white students in schools that had been majority black schools. Whites were 3.5 times more likely than Blacks to be sent to specialty school. At the same time, blacks who had attended those majority black schools or lived in those predominately black neighborhoods were displaced and bused out to majority white schools for desegregation purposes. Many majority black schools were closed or converted to magnet or specialty schools (e.g., Dahlk, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Jones, 1980; Jones, 2009; Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993).

4.3 White Flight through (Suburban) Geographical Choice

The more conventional form of choice connected to geographical choice described by Goyette (2008) was also practiced in Milwaukee. This second form of white flight was that of parents taking their students out of the MPS, moving to the suburbs, and enrolling them into majority white suburban schools (Dahlk, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993).

4.4 White Flight through Private School Choice

A third form of white flight was to enroll students in private schools, especially Catholic schools, which had been experiencing steady enrollment declines in Milwaukee in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Under this scenario parents pay the costs of their students attending private schools without public tax-levy dollars. This movement of white students to private schools at parents' expenses helped to stabilize those private school enrollments and reversed their enrollment decline. In some instances, white flight to these private and religious schools led to actual enrollment increases and waiting lists for white students desiring to get in those schools (Dahlk, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Miner, 2013).

White student flight accelerated with the federal 1976 desegregation order. For example, in the academic year 1975-1976 when the federal court decision was issued, white students comprised over 60.1% of the student population in MPS. Three years later when the 1979 federal decree order was issued settling the lawsuit, whites constituted only 47.7 % of MPS students. Dahlk (2010, p. 335) noted, "Between 1976 and 1985, one-third of white school age children left the city, and of those who remained, half attended private school." By the school year 2013-14, white students constituted only 13.6 % of MPS student population (e.g., Dahlk, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Jones, 1980; Jones, 2009; Miner, 2013; Stolee, 1993). As a percentage of the total student population, there has been a slight bump in the white student population since 2011, but the total number of white students enrolled in MPS remains low. See Figure 2

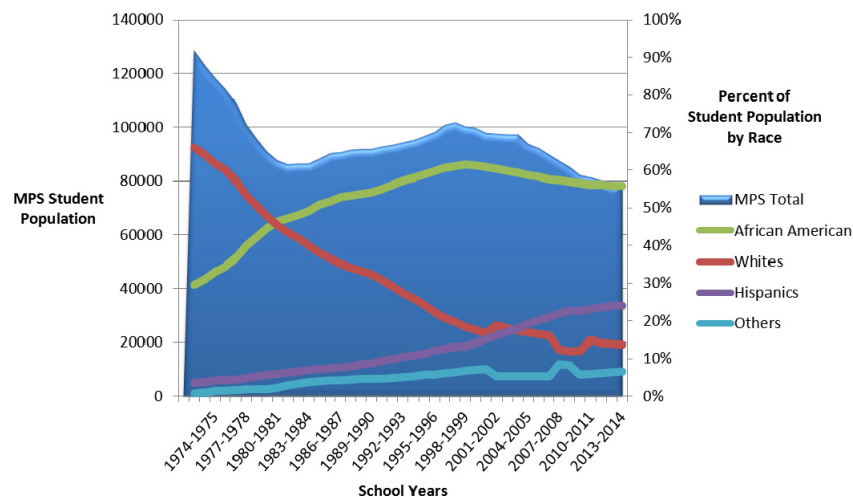


Figure 2. Milwaukee public schools: Enrollment by ethnic categories (various years)

5. New White Flight through the Wisconsin Open Enrollment Program

With the onset of the Wisconsin Open Enrollment Program in the academic year 1998-1999, white flight from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) took on a new form in several ways. First, white students were able to attend predominately white schools anywhere in the state of Wisconsin without a need for their families to move to those communities. Parents were not required to pay the residential suburban tax rates for their students to attend these suburban public schools. Second, there was no requirement to pay any additional administrative costs to handle the transfer of these students to the receiving districts. The newly created Open Enrollment Program paid for students to leave MPS by covering the cost of students attending public schools outside of the city of Milwaukee. Third, this form of white flight was encouraged by both policy makers and receiving school districts, who viewed this program as a revenue generator. According to a suburban school system superintendent, the Open Enrollment program provided a new revenue source for the receiving suburban schools, enabling them to fix their budget shortfalls and avoid raising property taxes in those communities or making major personnel and program cuts (Hetzner, 2009, June 30; Richards, 2013).

5.1 Parameters of the Wisconsin Open Enrollment Program

In 1997, the Wisconsin Legislature passed Act 27 that created the Open Enrollment Program, which is available for public school students in grades K-12. The Open Enrollment Program allows any student in the State of Wisconsin to attend a school anywhere in Wisconsin, other than his or her home school district, if the student's home school district offers the same program as the school district with which the student wishes to attend, and if the pupil's parent or guardian complies with certain application dates and procedures (Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 2013). Parents must submit an application for the program in the February before the next school year in which the students would like to

attend.

The Open Enrollment Program has no focus on cultural and racial integration and student busing, and all students, regardless of race, presumably have the same opportunity to participate. Admission into the program is not guaranteed. The Open Enrollment Program provides specific guidelines on which school districts (resident or nonresident) are responsible for services for students identified with special needs. In addition, the program specifies that the pupil's parent is responsible for providing the student transportation back to and from school, unless students need transportation as part of an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

The Open Enrollment Program is appealing to suburban school districts because they receive state aid for the students in the same year that they accept the students into their districts. This made the Wisconsin Open Enrollment program more attractive than the MPS Voluntary Integration Transportation Chapter 220 program, the landmark intra-and inter-district transfer program with explicit affirmative action goals, because the receiving school districts for the Chapter 220 program receive student fees during the *next* academic year, rather than the current one for Open Enrollment students (Bonds et al, 2015; Wisconsin Legislature Reference Bureau, 2013). Support for the Chapter 220 program has been fading for some time, and suburban districts acknowledge they prefer Open Enrollment because it is a better financial deal for them (Richards, 2013 December 24). Open Enrollment has long been preferred by the conservative administration in the State as well, and in 2015, the Chapter 220 program was phased out by the governor, who claimed there was a lack of interest in the program, even in the face of long wait lists for the program (Norman, 2015 April 6).

Several major changes have been made to the Open Enrollment Program since its inception in the 1998-199 School Year. For example, in June 2009, Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle vetoed a provision in the state budget that would have limited the amount of funds schools in Milwaukee County participating in the Open Enrollment program could secure for receiving individual Open Enrollment students. This meant that school districts participating in the Open Enrollment program would get more money for each student they received. Most of the money would eventually go to suburban school districts who accepted more Open Enrollment students. Most of these students are coming from the Milwaukee Public schools, thus negatively impact MPS enrollment (Hetzner, 2009 June 30). In 2011, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker lifted the overall enrollment cap on the Open Enrollment Program that had been imposed in 2007 (Arc, 2011; Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, 2013), which served to expand the program. This served to drastically increase the number of students participating in Open Enrollment.

There have been many direct benefits for the receiving schools and school districts for the Open Enrollment program. Some suburban school districts have used the program to balance its budget rather than to raise property taxes in their communities. For example, the Wauwatosa Public School District's Superintendent publicly stated that this program helped reduce the suburban district's budget deficit and prevented the need to raise additional taxes. During a public address, he stated, "On Wednesday, the Wauwatosa School Board took action

to try to avoid a possible \$1.7 million shortfall by approving the addition of 270 students through the state's open enrollment public school choice program next year. Each student translates into more than \$6,000 in state aid." (Hetzner, 2009 May 28). The additional 270 students came from MPS and helped the district to deal with its budget crisis (ibid).

6. Discussion of Demographic Trends of Participating Students in Open Enrollment

The Open Enrollment Program has contributed to white flight from the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) since its inception in the 1998-1999 school year. As can be seen in figure 3, the majority of students leaving MPS through the Open Enrollment Program since its inception in 1998-1999 have been white students. The percentage of white students in the Open Enrollment Program was a high of 83.9% in 1998-1999 to 54.3% in 2013-2014. At the same time, the number of students in the program increased from 62 in 1998-1999 to 6,906 in 2013-2014, an increase of 6,844 students (+11,038%) in 16 years. Historically, most students participating in the program have been white, even though the pool of potential white student applicants became smaller as white students declined as a percentage of MPS students overall. This mirrors findings in the Minneapolis regional open enrollment study. Orfield and Luce (2013, p. 9) wrote, "...overall, open enrollees from central cities were more likely to be white and non-poor than those who stayed behind." From the start of the Milwaukee area's Open Enrollment Program in 1998-1999 to the most recent year for which data are available, there were statistically significant differences between white versus all other students' use of the Open Enrollment program. Chi-square tests for equal proportion based on the counts of white versus all other students ranged from $X^2(1) = 28.45, p > 0.0001$ to $X^2(1) = 447.41, p > 0.0001$. More students of color have participated over time, however. The data show some convergence in the proportion Open Enrollment Program participation between whites and all others since the 2009-2010 school year, although the difference in proportion remains statistically significant (see Table 2). It is critical to note that white students continue to make up more than half of all enrollees in the Open Enrollment Program, even though they comprise a very small percentage of MPS students overall.

Table 2. Number and racial makeup of students in the open enrollment program

Program Year	Academic Year	# Students in Open Enrollment	# White students	% White	Other Students	% Other Students	χ^2
1	1998-1999	62	52	83.9	10	16.1	28.45
2	1999-2000	441	331	75.1	110	24.9	110.75
3	2000-2001	831	625	75.2	206	24.8	211.27
4	2001-2002	1,350	937	69.4	413	30.6	203.39
5	2002-2003	2,138	1,518	71.0	620	29.0	377.18
6	2003-2004	2,762	1,931	69.9	831	30.1	438.09
7	2004-2005	3,286	2,229	67.8	1,057	32.2	418.01
8	2005-2006	3,662	2,471	67.5	1,191	32.5	447.41
9	2006-2007	3,719	2,497	67.1	1,222	32.9	437.11
10	2007-2008	3,893	2,551	65.5	1,342	34.5	375.46
11	2008-2009	4,367	2,790	63.9	1,577	36.1	336.93
12	2009-2010	5,193	2,996	57.7	2,197	42.3	122.94

13	2010-2011	5,781	3,525	61.0	2,256	39.0	278.56
14	2011-2012	5,991	3,567	59.5	2,424	40.5	218.07
15	2012-2013	6,696	3,845	57.4	2,851	42.6	147.56
16	2013-2014	6,906	3,752	54.3	3,154	45.7	51.78

Source: Milwaukee Public Schools (August 22, 2013).

χ^2 test of proportion. For all tests, $DF=1, p<.0001$.

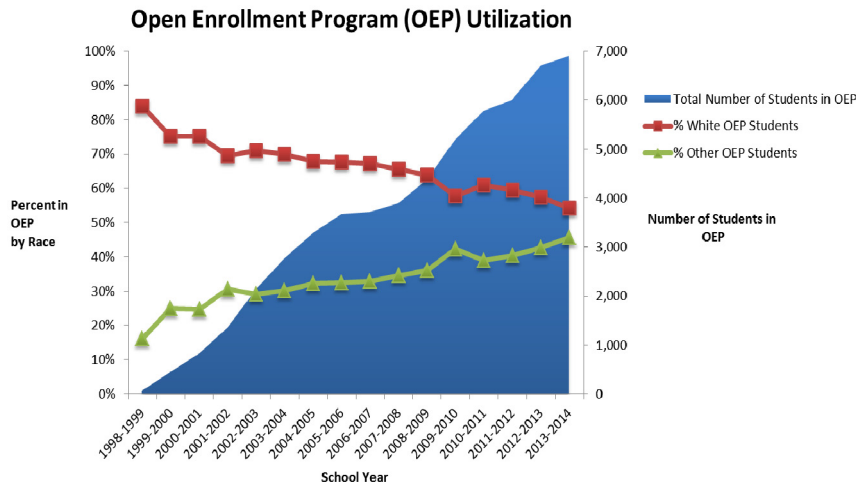


Figure 3. Open enrollment program utilization

Source: Milwaukee Public Schools (August 22, 2013)

Critically, the increase in the number of students participating in the Open Enrollment Program had significant financial implications for the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) district as a whole, and its ability to serve its diverse student population. The Open Enrollment Program has cost MPS \$321.7 million since its inception in 1998-1999, which averages out to \$20.1 million per year over the 16 years of the program existence. As figure 4 indicates, the cost of the Open Enrollment for MPS increased from \$416,092 in 1998-1199, the first year of the program to a projected \$47million in the current academic year 2013-2013, an increase of \$46,583,908 (Milwaukee Public Schools, 2013). Given the stresses of deindustrialization and poverty described earlier, this shortfall is devastating to the children enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools.

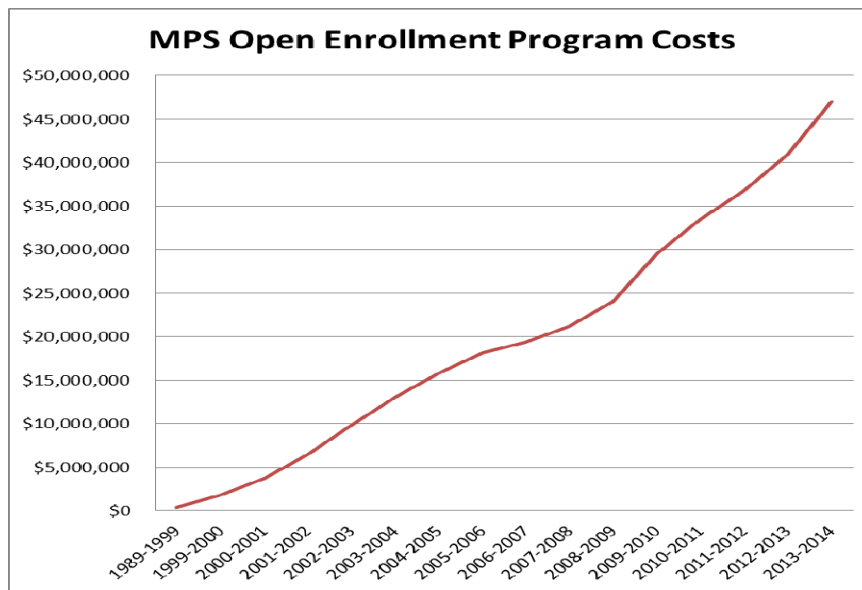


Figure 4. MPS open enrollment program costs

Source: Milwaukee Public Schools (August 22, 2013).

7. Conclusion

This paper provided a mixed-methods investigation into the consequences of contemporary urban school choice policy on patterns of school and neighborhood segregation within the Milwaukee region. The authors found that the Milwaukee Open Enrollment Program, while seemingly neutral, in terms of affirmative action goals or explicit attempts to dismantle those goals, resulted in increased re-segregation and exacerbated the inequality of the school systems in the region. While residential choice will likely remain an important indicator for satisfaction with choice of schools, open enrollment and other school choice programs provide more options for well-to-do families to live in urban neighborhoods that they might not have previously considered.

The Wisconsin state-sponsored open enrollment program has a number of negative consequences for urban education. The Milwaukee Open Enrollment Program has led to an increase in the number of white students leaving the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) System, thus helping to contribute to its racial segregation. The program also has contributed to a significant decline in revenues to the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) System. The amount of revenue diverted from MPS to cover the cost of the open enrollment increased from \$416,092 in the programs' first year in 1989-1999 to a projected \$47 million in 2013-2014, the current academic year – or about 4% of the total MPS budget. Such diversion of funding meant fewer resources were available for the Milwaukee Public School System (MPS) to support its students, thus further contributing to its financial challenges. Arguably, these revenue losses have also meaningfully contributed to declines in school performance, profoundly impacting the instructional quality of the students remaining in the MPS system.

On the other hand, this state-sponsored program been a boon to suburban districts, and has essentially led to urban taxpayers subsidizing suburban school districts. As suburban schools lost population and experienced subsequent declines in enrollment, they were able to make up the lost revenue from its declining student population without the need to raise property taxes by participating in the Open Enrollment program.

Critics of school choice policies have long argued that “full-scale use of choice by parents might lead to greater stratification within U.S. primary and secondary schools, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity” (Falbo, Glover, Holcombe & Stokes, 2005, p. 2). These arguments often focus on the concerns over the kind of choices *parents* are likely to make, which may be based more on social capital and less on objective measures of school quality (e.g., Olson Beal & Hendry, 2012; Villavicencio, 2013). The authors in this paper argue there are multiple *structural* impediments that ensure that choice programs do not work as originally intended, such as the lack of support for transportation costs to ensure that all parents can send their children to the schools of their choice. The structural flaws inherent in choice policies deserve careful consideration for their role in increasing racial segregation of schools.

7.1 Limitations and Future Study

This study used participant demographic information by race, but future study would benefit from a review of socio-economic data of participants to test some assumptions described here. A critical area for future study would be to disaggregate data by free and reduced lunch recipients enrolled in the program compared to the general MPS student population. Another area to explore is the convergence between whites and students of color participating in the program. This might be explained by the fact that there are fewer white MPS students to “flee” from the local urban public schools in Milwaukee. We also need to know more about the non-white students participating in the Open Enrollment program to fully understand this phenomenon -- it may be that their families have higher socio-economic statuses, and are therefore in a better position to bear the burden of the transportation costs than other MPS students. We may need to consider that the Open Enrollment Program may have become so well-known that more people of color choose to participate. Or, as wait lists have grown for the shrinking voluntary integration transportation program, Milwaukee’s Chapter 220 program (Bonds et al, 2015), more students of color choose Open Enrollment as a last resort option to attend suburban schools in the Milwaukee area. While this study makes a significant contribution to the literature by focusing on Milwaukee Public School data, a regional undertaking with an analysis of participating suburban districts would shed more light on this matter.

This case study provided a look at how the implementation of one school choice program contributes to increased stratification and inequality in regional public schools. It corroborates other research that indicates open enrollment programs, one of the most popular school choice tools nationally (Good & Brazen, 2014), lead to increased stratification by race in participating schools and districts. While inter-and intra-district open enrollment programs are unlikely to go away anytime soon, programs with specific affirmative action goals, such

as Milwaukee's Chapter 220 program are going away. As noted earlier Milwaukee's Chapter 220 program closed its doors in 2015, with no plans to replace it (Norman, 2015). Therefore, it is more urgent than ever that modifications to open enrollment programs occur so that they too can provide opportunities for students of color and students with low socio-economic to participate equally by offsetting some of the costs associated with them, intentionally create more integrated school communities, and provide a more equitable distribution of financial resources among school districts.

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Note

Note 1. Parents are not always in a position to choose the “best” school for their children, and their choices often reflect more about existing social capital networks (Villavicencio, 2013).

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