

Transportation & Integration

Dr. Erica Frankenberg

Civil Rights Project, Initiative on School Integration

Early history

- Pre-*Brown* busing was often used to maintain segregation
- The first formal discussion of free transportation was written into the 1965 U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare's (HEW) desegregation guidelines outlining how districts should comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Legal History

- The 1968 *Green v. New Kent County* ruling explicitly recognized transportation as one of six factors necessary to fully integrate schools.
- *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg* recognized the role of residential segregation in undermining efforts to promote real school integration. *Swann* represented the first judicial decision explicitly mandating the busing of students for the purpose of desegregation.

Politicizing “Busing”

- In 1972 campaign, Nixon’s opposition to busing was one of his three domestic policy emphases
- President Carter & AG Griffin Bell opposed busing, yet supported some metropolitan desegregation efforts & combined with housing desegregation
- The Reagan administration slashed desegregation funding & research; petitioned the Court beginning in 1982 to restrict busing

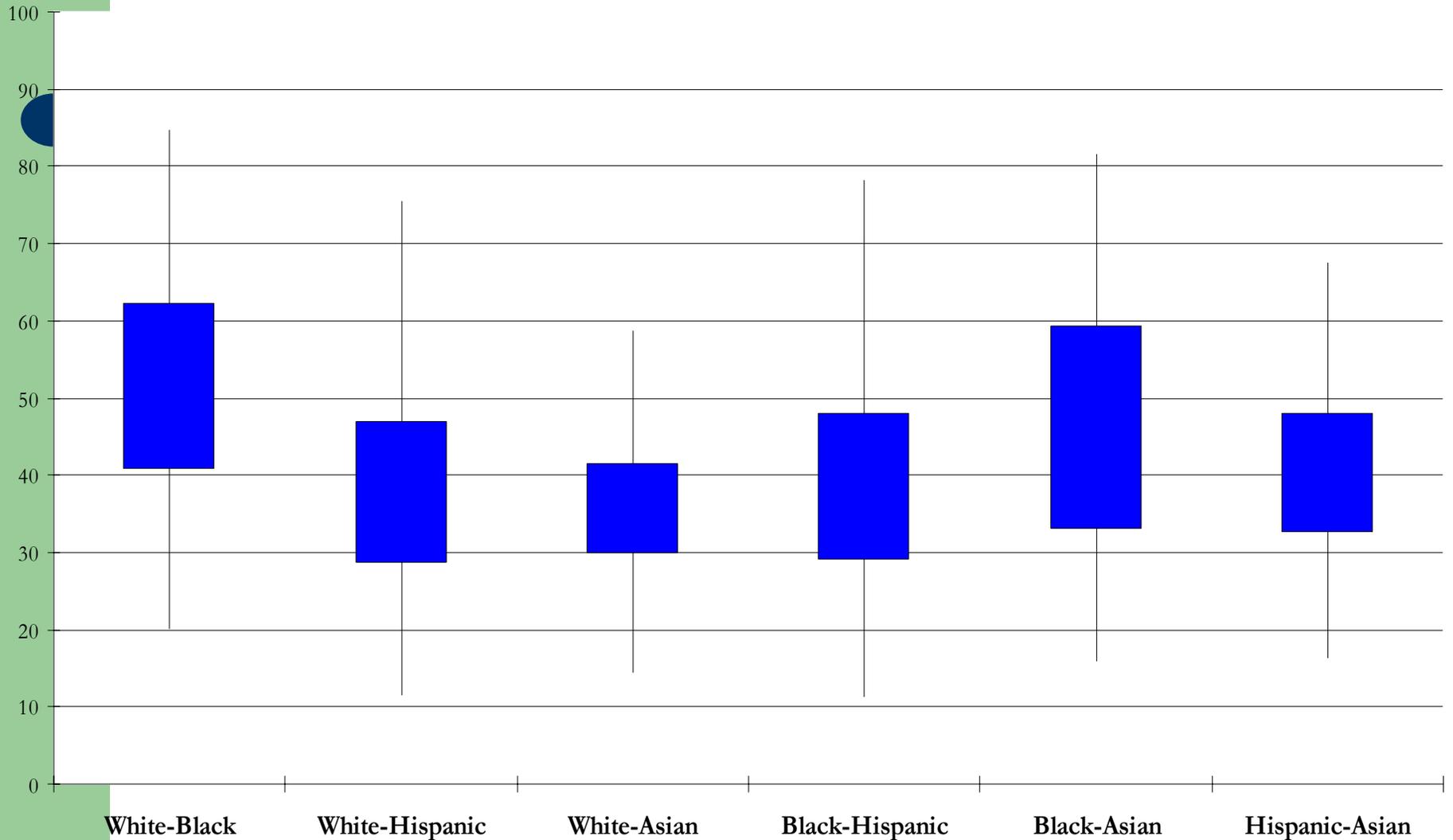
Earlier Public Opinion

- Gallup polls from mid-1970s
 - when people were asked about desegregation they said they were really only opposed to busing,
 - BUT when they were asked about busing, they said it was fine unless it was required for integration
- Harris survey, 1975: 74% opposed to busing for achievement of racial balance
- NORC, 1972: 87% of whites opposed busing black & white children from one school district to another.

More Recent Public Opinion

- 1985 NORC
 - 93% of whites supported the principle of school integration
- 1996 NORC
 - 67% of whites opposed busing
 - Whites of youngest generation were most supportive of busing
 - 41% of blacks opposed busing, which remained relatively stable since the early 1970s; Southern blacks were most supportive

MSA Residential Segregation, 2000



Magnet Schools & Transportation

- A study of magnet schools in two large Midwestern districts found that particularly among minority parents, the availability of transportation was a consideration in choosing a magnet school for their children (Smrekar & Goldring, 1999).
- In our recent study, we found higher percentages of magnet schools that do not providing free transportation to students are more likely to be largely one-race magnet programs (Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2008).

Choice, Desegregation, & Transportation

- Distances were often relatively short under mandatory assignments, making efficient transport - picking up all students from one area and dropping them at another destination - easily possible.
- By contrast, choice plans require that students be picked up from different areas and dropped off, often in small numbers and to many destinations.
- But, choice plans may lead to further stratification unless all are equally able to choose schools, which may include transportation.

Interdistrict Programs & Transportation

- Boston: in 2007, METCO transportation cost \$1700 per student
- St. Louis: at peak of program, transportation costs were \$30 million
- Hartford: transportation costs were \$3.7 million in 2006-07
- Tradeoffs between length & cost
- Length of bus ride has affected the retention of city students in some programs

Interdistrict Programs-cont.

- Minneapolis: only 1/3 of participants reported that they would choose the same school without free transportation; avg. bus ride was 33 minutes
- Importance of transportation to allow city students the ability to fully participate in life of school community
- Are there non-transportation solutions that can minimize cost such as more students per school?

Transportation Cutbacks

- Transportation to schools that may be at a geographic distance from some students' homes (as compared to closer neighborhood school options) is particularly important where households have multiple earners and where parents may not have work schedules that allow them to transport children to these schools.
- Yet, at the same time, as fuel costs rise, transportation costs for school districts are sky-rocketing, and transportation for out of zone students has been the focus of a number of school districts across the nation as they look to cut costs

Transportation Cut Examples

- Alabama: was granted a federal waiver from the NCLB transfer provisions to provide students with additional options if a neighborhood school is not performing well
 - Mobile, AL eliminated transportation for magnet middle & high schools

Cutback Examples, cont.

- Milwaukee: ended a longstanding policy of cross-district busing for high school students, reverting to a neighborhood school system in place prior to desegregation
- Districts in Florida, Connecticut, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Georgia have also contemplated transportation cuts for magnet students

Looking Forward: Things to think about

- Perception of transportation
- Partnerships with schools & public transit officials
- Transportation considerations when building new schools
- Continuing housing integration efforts
- Equity of transportation