Research Questions

• Given that Jefferson County has a school assignment integration plan, can a difference in the racial distribution of students in schools be noted when compared to Mecklenburg County?
• Is the plan working to achieve its goals of desegregation?
• Are Jefferson County schools more racially integrated?
• Can the integration be demonstrated spatially?

Policy Review

Jefferson County

• 1975: Kentucky Board of Education mandates a race-based busing system to promote desegregation.
• 2007: Meredith vs. Jefferson County Public School: Deemed unconstitutional to integrate schools solely on the basis of race. A new plan that aspires to create integrated clusters on the basis of income, family education level, and percent whiteness was developed and is currently in place.

Mecklenburg County

• 1971 Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education: The Supreme Court’s first metropolitan wide desegregation decision.
• 2002: Racial based integration ended. Public schools began to re-segregate and have remained so to present times. Students are assigned to schools solely based on geographic location.

Data and Method

Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS)

• Kentucky and North Carolina
  • Jefferson and Mecklenburg Counties
• Academic Year Fall 2013
• Elementary public school grades 3-5
  • 88 in Jefferson County
  • 103 in Mecklenburg County

Descriptive Analysis

• Polar histograms depict the racial breakdown, as a percentage, for the Jefferson County and Mecklenburg County school districts. Each bar on the charts represents an individual elementary school within the respective county.
• In the Jefferson County chart, the schools are grouped into the 13 clusters that the school assignment plan denotes.
• Spatial correlation graphs display the proportions of White and Black students. Each point represents a school in its respective county, and the size of the point aids in visualizing the proportions.

Discussion

• A comparison of the polar histograms shows that Jefferson County schools appear to be more integrated than Mecklenburg County Schools.
  • Percentages of each racial group remain relatively consistent across schools.
  • Jefferson County schools are less likely to be dominated by a single racial group, whereas in Mecklenburg County, minority-majority schools are frequent.
• The spatial graphs show that in both counties, where Whites are prevalent, Blacks are sparse and vice versa.
  • In Jefferson County, the city of Louisville schools are largely populated with minorities, while the outer suburbs are populated by whites.
  • A similar effect is observed in Mecklenburg schools near the city of Charlotte.
• In conclusion, the Jefferson County integration plan has not fully broken down racial segregation in schools, especially in urban areas, and a more comprehensive policy must be created to do so.

Motivation

• Although segregation was deemed unconstitutional more than 50 years ago, many schools across the country remain segregated due to policies in counties and states (1).
• Students in segregated schools are often deprived of the positive outcomes associated with integrated school settings (2):
  • better critical thinking,
  • communication,
  • social skills, and
  • lack of poverty.

References