




# **Suburban Multiracial Transformation in a Policy Vacuum:**


Denial, Resegregation, or New Strategies?

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- Investigation of the effects of suburban change on the educational opportunities of poor and minority students
  - Demographic research has suggested the importance of municipal boundaries in structuring metropolitan segregation
    - Considerably less focus on suburban schools or districts
  - Project supported by the Spencer Foundation

Changing nature of suburbia

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# Understanding Suburban School District Transformation: A Typology of Suburban Districts

Erica Frankenberg  
Pennsylvania State University

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- ❑ Demographic analysis of the largest 25 metropolitan areas (MSAs)
  - ❑ Using NCES Common Core of Data since 1990-91
  - ❑ Suburb: defined here as anything within a metropolitan area that is not a principal or central city; metropolitan area definitions from 2003 Office of Management and Budget guidelines.

## Data and definitions

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- Unlike the central city, the “suburbs” may encompass many different jurisdictions at different distance from the central city, types of tax base and demand for social services, and histories of settlement (M. Orfield, 2002).
  - The political fragmentation of suburbia has institutionalized differing characteristics of populations within these suburban jurisdictions (Oliver, 2001; Weiher, 1991; Frankenberg, 2009; Puentes & Warren, 2006).
  - *Milliken* limited most cross-district student assignment efforts; rarely voluntarily implemented

Suburban districts:

Dozens of little democracies

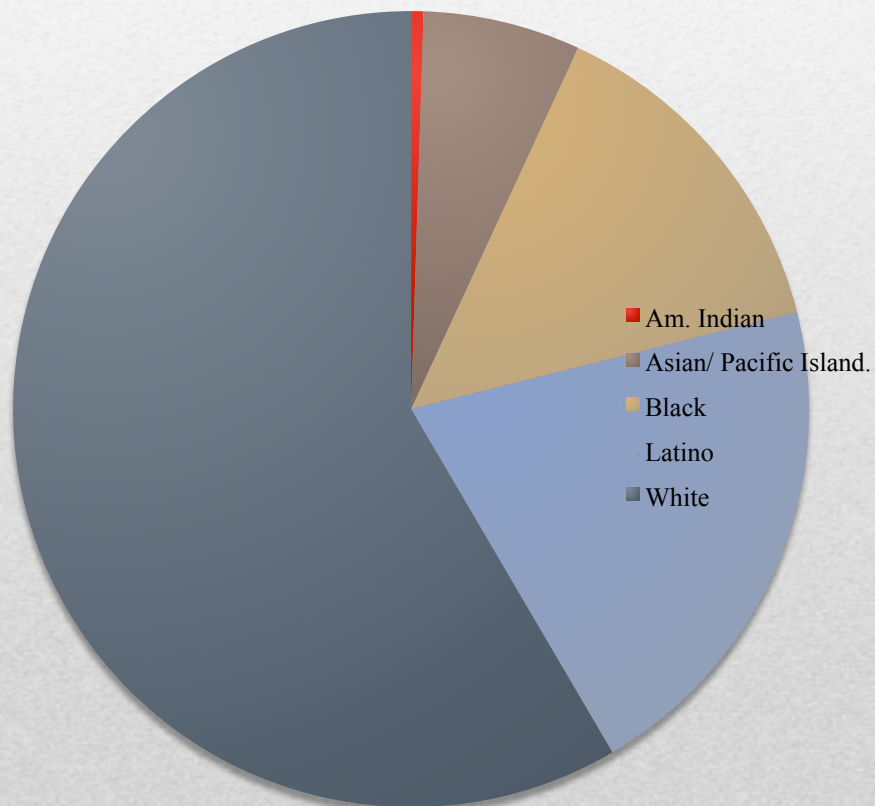
- Suburban enrollment in largest 25 MSAs has grown from 8.6 million in 1990-1 to nearly 12 million in 2006-7
- Today, these students account for 24.8% of all public school students
- Suburban enrollment larger than city in 20 of the MSAs
  - More likely in the Midwest, less suburban in the Sunbelt--though Sunbelt experiencing large growth

## Suburban School Enrollment

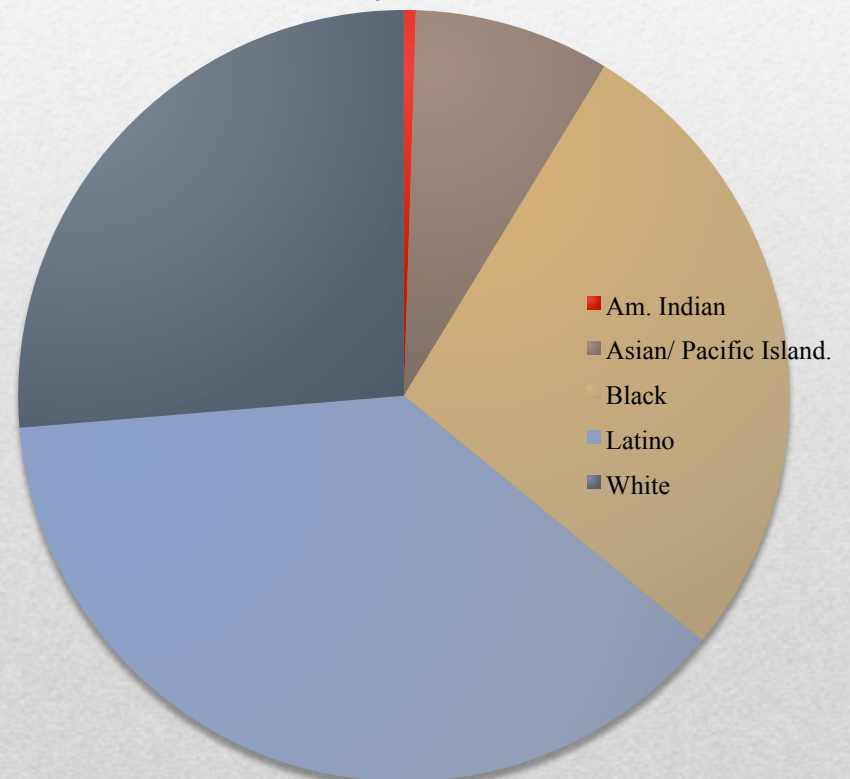
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# Multiracial nature of students in largest metropolitan areas

**Suburban Enrollment**



**Central City Enrollment**







## Racial enrollment change, 1999-2006

- An increase of more than 850,000 Latinos in suburban schools of our nation's largest metros
    - Latino growth since 1999 accounts for 70% of the increase in suburban students.
    - In nine metropolitan areas, the Latino suburban enrollment has doubled in just seven years
  - White suburban students *declined* by more than 170,000
    - Percentage of white suburban students has fallen in each MSA since 1999
    - Highest decline was in suburban Dallas (15%)
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# Suburban sorting across boundary lines

	District-level dissimilarity, 2006-07		
	Below 30	30-60	Above 60
White-Black	3	15	6
White-Latino	3	19	2
White-Asian	4	20	0
Black-Latino	8	15	1
Black-Asian	5	11	8
Latino-Asian	3	20	1
Poor-nonpoor	7	17	0

- City-suburban poverty gap
- Growth in low-income students in suburbia
  - Declining enrollment districts have a much higher percentage of low-income students, on average
- Differences in poverty exposure across city-suburban boundary
  - But, differences also exist *within* suburbia for poor and non-poor students.
- Economic segregation highest in fragmented areas

## Uneven spread of poverty in suburbia

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# Suburban District typology

Cluster	N	Description
Immigration meccas	142	Slower racial change, larger size, moderate percentages of Asian, Latino, & low-income students
Exclusive enclaves	703	High shares of white students, low poverty, minimal racial change.
Countywide districts	13	Very large districts, racially diverse with moderate shares of black & Latino students
Exurbs	1,102	Very little racial change, few minority students, mixed socioeconomic status; distant from central city
Inner-ring transitioning	75	Extremely rapid racial change, small size, moderate percentages of minority students & low-income students, few whites; located close to central city
Satellite cities	305	Moderate racial change, low-income students with high black & Latino, larger size

# Characteristics of Schools, by Suburban Cluster

	N of schools (2006-07)	School-level White change 1999-2006	Percentage of students in 90-100% minority schools		Percentage of students in 90-100% white schools	
			1999-00	2006-07	1999-00	2006-07
Satellite cities	1,381	14.38	2.45%	13.66%	7.01%	0.78%
Exclusive enclaves	3,478	8.46	3.27%	6.69%	27.61%	10.77%
Countywide	518	11.86	17.66%	23.66%	15.33%	5.14%
Exurbs	4,068	3.27	15.34%	18.41%	45.42%	35.74%
Developing immigration meccas	2,480	12.79	5.52%	12.92%	17.03%	8.25%
Inner-ring transitioning	312	19.30	1.43%	6.11%	8.33%	0.00%
Total	12,237	8.61	8.04%	13.27%	27.22%	15.70%

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- Historically, suburbs were places of opportunity and mobility.
    - These findings suggest this is not uniformly true.
  - Racial and economic transition is diversifying suburbia, particular in certain geographic regions.
  - Suburban fragmentation is associated with the highest levels of suburban segregation.

## What is a suburban district?





# **Suburban Change & the Power of Place: A Case Study of Demographic Change in a Suburban San Antonio, Texas District**

Jennifer Jellison Holme, Ph.D., *The University of Texas at Austin*

Sarah Diem, Ph.D., *University of Missouri*

Anjalé Welton, Ph.D., *University of Connecticut*

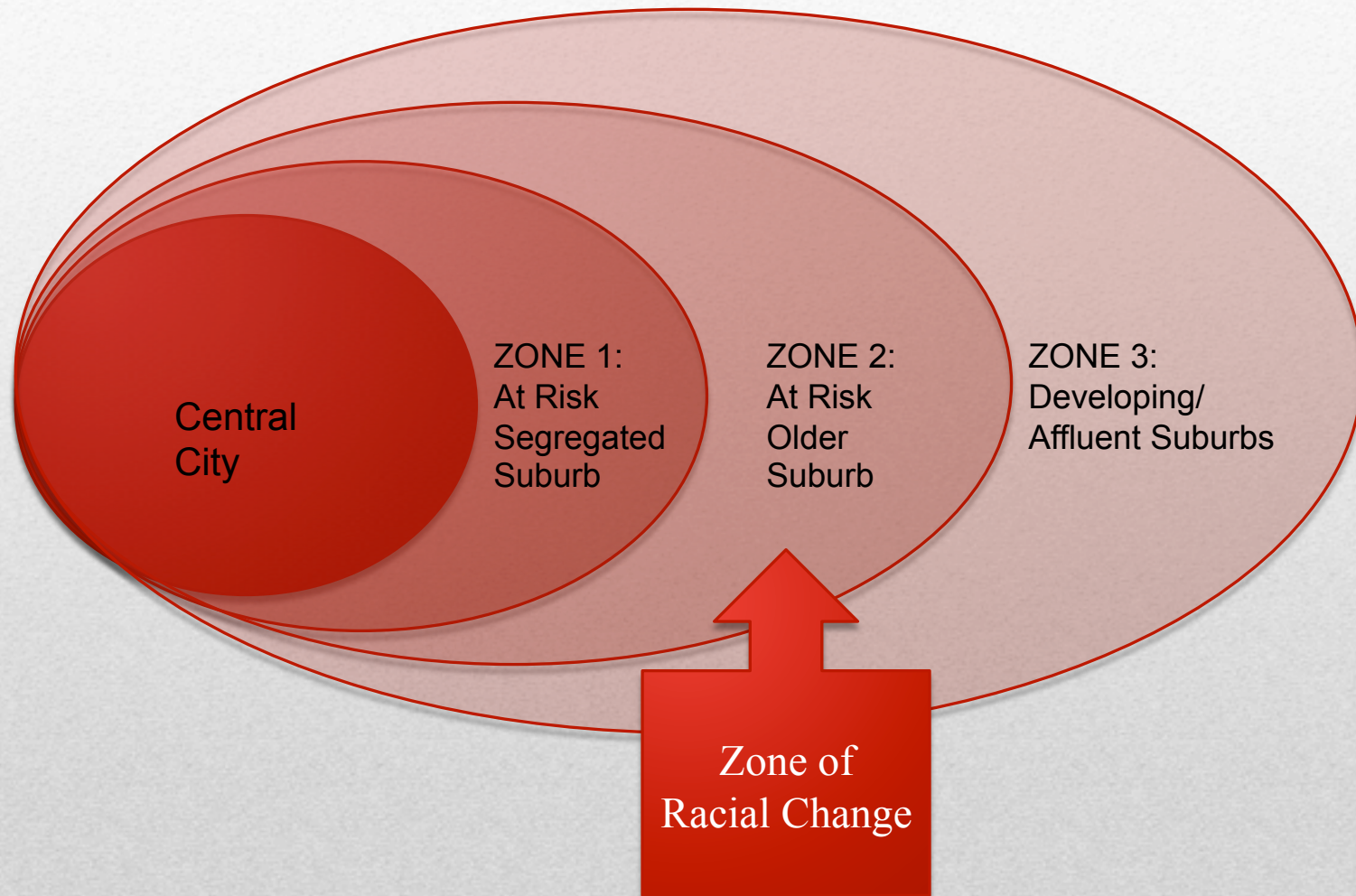
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# **The Context:**

## **Shifting Zone of Racial Change**

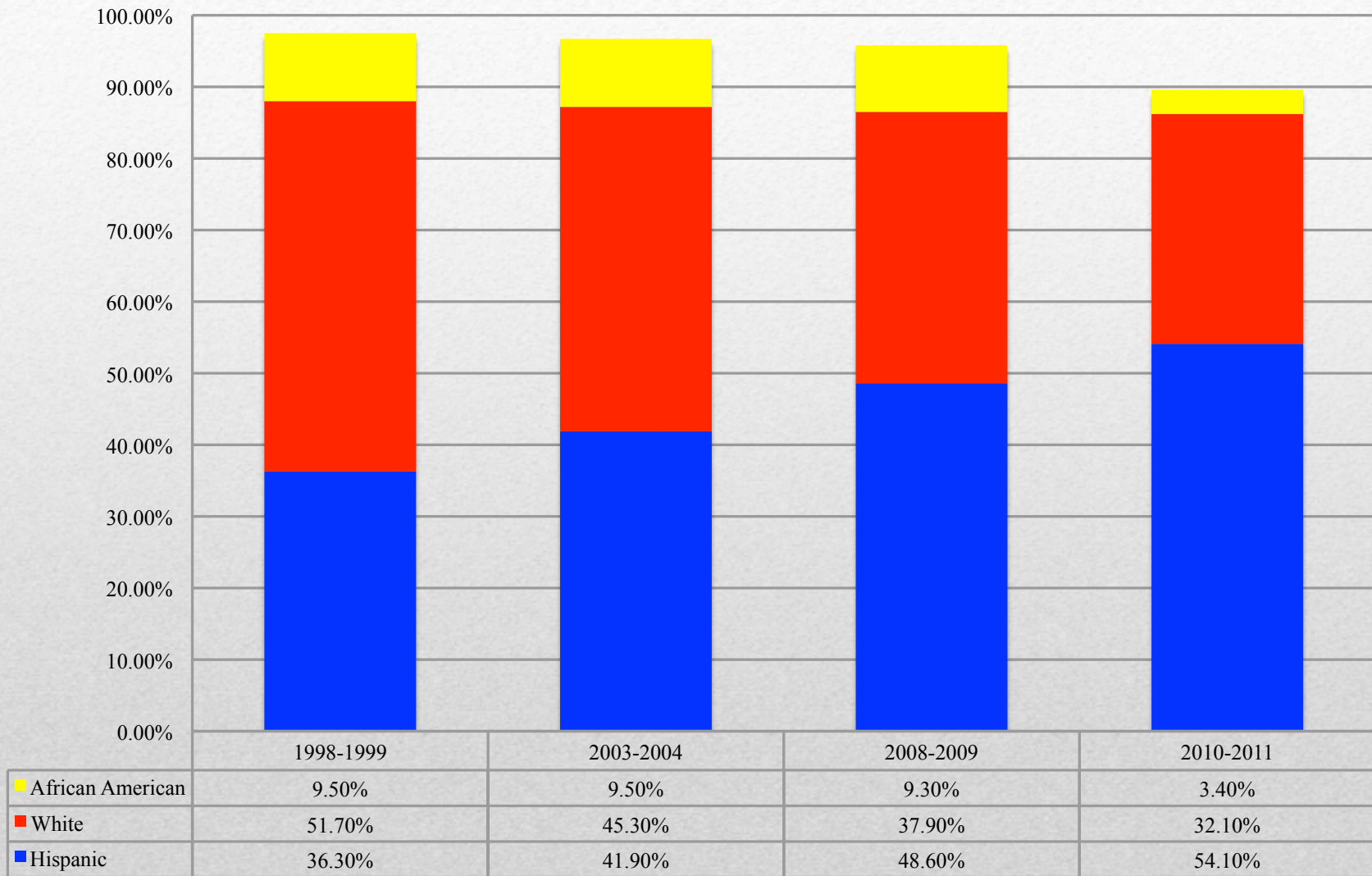
- San Antonio is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest city in the U.S.: 1.35 million
  - Population increased by 18% since 2000 = largest growth among the 10 largest U.S. cities
  - Southwest ISD is among the 100 largest districts in the U.S.
  - Approximately 140 square miles
  - Majority of the district in the City of San Antonio; also includes a number of other smaller communities
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## Zones of Racial Change in Southwest ISD





## Ethnic and Racial Composition of Southwest ISD



- Stone's theory of Systemic Power: Policy decisions are reflective of social stratification and the geographic distribution of power.
- "...inequalities in economic situation, social status, and organizational position carry great weight in building relationships for governing (Stone 2005a, 325 as cited in Orr and Johnson, 2008, p. 12).
- "Public officials experience strategic dependencies predisposing them to favor upper- over lower-strata interests. Thus some groups are in a position to receive official cooperation, while others encounter substantial resistance" (p.34).

## **Power, Politics and District Decisions**

- Political pressure from elite parents in Zone 2 (Zone of Racial Change”
- Most evident in school boundary decisions : McKinley (Zone 2) to Ford (Zone 3)
- “I think that if you had it to do all over, if you started a school district and all your schools were on the ground that are there today, you would never draw the lines the way they have been drawn. And so if you looked at a map of our school districts the lines are really catawampus, they’re crazy. But , but you can’t touch those boundaries you know not and survive politically. ....Those are hard fought battles and they pit neighborhood and have and have nots, whether it is really that way or not, that’s the way they perceive it and so those are pretty intense battles.
  - -District administrator

## **Power, Politics and District Decisions**



- Interests of elites are reflected in both formal policies and informal decisions/internal decisions
  - Administrative appointments
  - School of choice policy
    - Open enrollment
    - Non-race based magnet schools to attract parents, highly segregated


## **Power, Politics and District Decisions**

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- Making “separate” more “equal”:
  - Single member district school board elections
  - Redistribution of resources
    - “Of all things [the lawsuit] was the best thing that ever happened to the district...because it made us focus on every area and so we were able then with seven single member districts to put in an equity plan, like let’s say for our Bond issues. We put in a billion dollars worth of bonds and over half of it is really focused on existing schools.” –Senior Administrator
  - Tax base used to fund supports for struggling schools, and meeting accountability benchmarks

## **External Mandates, Political Leeway**

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- Decisions of district most influenced by parents most threatened by racial change (Zone of Racial Change)
  - For districts undergoing racial change the politics of this zone must be recognized and addressed
  - Uncertainty fueled their fears; addressing segregation and creating stability may be one strategy.

# **Conclusions/Implications**

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# **Suburban Racial Change: Sewall County**

Elizabeth DeBray  
Ain Grooms  
University of Georgia

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- Not only racial diversity, but regional
- Minorities moving into the county are middle- and upper-middle class
- Average educational level of African Americans exceeds that of whites
- Expectation of an increase in discipline problems in schools
- Absence of bilingual education
- Issues of poverty across all racial lines

# Race and Class

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Population	Sewall County	City A (North)	County Seat (Center)	City B (Southwest)	City C (Southeast)
2009	195,370	14,679	19,928	5,355	4,989
2000	119,341	9,853	8,493	3,857	2,322
1990	58,741	3,359	2,929	2,694	1,681
% change since 1990	233%	337%	580%	99%	197%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau					

# Population

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Population	Sewall County	City A (North)	County Seat (Center)	City B (Southwest)	City C (Southeast)
% White	62.7	35.8	37.8	71.3	65.9
% change since 2000	-18.7	-35.8	-23.6	-12.9	-16.1
%African American	30.5	51.7	54.8	20.3	30.0
% change since 2000	15.8	31.2	20.5	6.9	15.6
% Asian	2.7	6.6	1.0	0.9	0.3
% change since 2000	0.9	2.1	-0.4	0.2	-0.1
%Hispanic	4.7	7.6	5.3	8.5	3.9
% change since 2000	2.4	3.4	1.8	6.8	1.8
Source: American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau					

# Racial Demographics

- Student achievement is main goal
- Zoning is based on population growth, not racial balance in schools
- Hiring diverse teaching staff is critical, but goal is “the most qualified”
- No plans for magnet or charter schools

## **Policies Adopted**


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- High quality education is the goal
  - Respect for all cultures
  - Emphasis on multiculturalism but not integration
  - Little discussion about racism
  - Need for continued community-wide dialogue

**How does issue get (re)  
framed?**

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- Proactive community leadership as demographics changed
  - High level of involvement from Chamber of Commerce
  - One [Sewall] Initiative / Connect [Sewall]
  - Trips to North Carolina and Alabama


## **Civic Capacity / Collaboration**

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# **BCPS: Suburban Change and Conflict in a County-Wide district**

- Barbara J. Shircliffe, Ph.D.
  - Jennifer Morley, Ph.D.
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Population growth (+23% since 2000) and Diversification (e.g. white population declined from 75% to 53%; Hispanic population increased from 18% to 25% since 2000).

One of the top 10 largest districts in US encompassing three incorporated cities, including a major metropolitan area, and unincorporated urban, rural and suburban communities.

≈254 schools, enrolling 192,000 pupils.

Operates under Choice after three decades of court supervised desegregation.

**BCPS**

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“This is kind of ironic, the interest rates went low, houses were easier to purchase, we saw from that aspect the diversity change within our own community and become more diverse. It still was a good community, I mean nothing wrong with the community, and it just became more diverse. We had more Hispanic populations moving into our area, African American, and just kind of diversified the community”

- Sites of employment and affordable housing
- Single family units purchased during a time in unprecedented large scale mortgage lending, increase in rental properties (apartment complexes), and federally subsidized housing

# Megasuburbs

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## **Diversity is Good for Public Education**

- Suburban areas /schools are “more balanced”
- Creates integrated schools without “artificial” remedies (i.e. bussing, magnets)
- However, valuing of diverse schools seldom is framed in terms of “academic excellence”

## **Suburban Homeowners/Tax Payers**

- Suburban high status communities “have a fit” or “freak out”
- “Move those people”
- “Watering down,” lower test scores, drain on resources, decline property values, school grade, the “graying” of suburban areas, etc.

# **Competing discourses**

- Schools “comfort” was related to levels of school segregation (CHOICE)
- Divergent class-based and racialized discourses and strategies for making schools “comfortable”
- Academic Capital v. Social Capital (see Wells & Crain, 1997; Caldes, et., al., 2008) among divergent discursive policy/strategies

# Comfort Zones

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# Policy?

No policy or policy talk on preventing racial segregation among schools in suburban areas. District committed to offering high quality educational choices.

- Utilizes magnets and other themed programs to facilitate urban-suburban school choice.
- Establish non-contiguous zones in urban areas to bus urban students into suburban schools to ease overcrowding (Florida Class Size Amendment).
- Magnets in predominately Latino/a in rural areas.

## Changing School Climate

- Expressed need for faculty diversification.
- Opening up access to AP (College Readiness).
- Targeting resources for compensatory programs.

## Disconnect between district and school level discourse

- Parental involvement, policies limiting bilingual education, RTI /PBS, faculty diversity, push for AP enrollment, etc.
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