

**The Struggle For School Equality:
The Failures of Desegregating Boston and Milwaukee**

Daniel J. Wimmer

History 489: Research Seminar

December 20, 2016

Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Historiography.....	5
Era of No Choice	8
Era of Forced Integration.....	11
Era of Choice	17
Boston's Forced Choice.....	21
Controlled Choice.....	25
Conclusion	28
Works Cited.....	30

Abstract

This paper examines the school desegregation process that took place in the cities of Milwaukee and Boston. Two common forms of segregation present in these cities since their creation were de facto and de jure. De facto segregation is segregation caused by social norms and ideas, while de jure is segregation using laws. Even though segregated schools were ruled illegal in 1954, many remained segregated into the 1970s through de facto segregation. Throughout the paper I will detail all of the decisions that the two cities school boards made while attempting to complete the court ordered integration. More specifically, I will detail the decisions that ultimately proved to be complete failures. Both Milwaukee and Boston required multiple attempts at integrating the schools, and still weren't completely successful. My goal is to pinpoint the decisions that the two cities made which caused issues that are still prevalent today. Decisions that these school boards made did not produce much change, and in some cases made the schools throughout the city worse. As well, I hope to find a possible solution that could possibly work in future attempted integration programs.

Introduction

Countless schools located in Milwaukee and Boston is labeled as either a white or black school. How is this possible? Weren't segregated schools deemed unconstitutional in 1954? These were the questions that ran through my head as I grew up in the Milwaukee area. Every school that I was enrolled in throughout my adolescence was attended by a majority of black and Latino students in the population. I can personally recall several classes in high school where I was one of five white students in the entire class. However, even though I was the minority in the school system that I attended, it never once fazed me. After graduating high school I decided to attend UW-Eau Claire, and this is when I realized how little schools throughout Wisconsin are integrated.

The University of Wisconsin Eau Claire is by far the whitest school that I have ever attended throughout my educational career. I observed this as soon as I stepped onto campus for the first time. What was more astonishing to me is that the predominantly white student demographic was a common trend for many of the other students that also attended the University. Learning about how unique my schooling was compared to others showed me that segregation in the schools is a real issue. Milwaukee and Boston are two of the most segregated cities in our country. The school systems in these cities appear to have never diverted away from the pre Brown ideology. Knowing that segregation is still taking place in the schools has pushed me to research why it is still taking place. Did the government do anything to attempt desegregation? What decisions were made to fix the problems that existed? Or perhaps segregation was so engrained into the culture of these

cities that it was impossible to fix the problems created due to Jim Crow and racism. These questions are what led me to pick this topic for my capstone.

Schools in America have been an ever-changing institution since their creation in the early 1600's. During the colonial period, schools were under the control of individual city's and families. The government had little to no say in how the various schools were run, as well as what was being taught. Instead of teaching students about topics from multiple content areas the main focus was on reading and writing. Reading was taught so students could read the Bible and listen to the government's laws. Protestant and Euro-American ideas dominated school environments, with the separation of blacks and whites being one of them. Children from Black, Irish, Jewish, and many other families were denied access to quality education because of where they came from, or the color of their skin. The only way that members of these various ethnic and racial groups could experience any education was by creating their own schools. African Americans and Irish immigrants had no choice but to create their own school systems. Schools that were designated to these groups received zero funding from the states in which they were located, and thus hindered any opportunity to turn them into credible learning institutions. Activists like W.E.B Dubois in the Niagara movement attempted to do whatever they could to assist the struggling schools around the country. Even sending their beliefs to the national government stating their issues.¹ Why were

¹ The Scroll, ""The Niagara Movement"," *AUC Woodruff Library Digital Exhibits*, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/items/show/145>.

these separate schools allowed to exist? The answer is found in one of America's most iconic Supreme Court cases.

Plessey vs. Ferguson was the Supreme Court case that established the idea of separate but equal. While the decision didn't focus on the education system in America, however it did create the precedent that African Americans did not have the right to be in the same establishments as whites, and this was especially evident in schools. While white and black students were separated, the schools that they were placed in were far from equal. African American schools hardly had the materials necessary to adequately teach the students who attended. These sub standard conditions were what prompted numerous civil rights groups to call for change.² Efforts to desegregate the school system took a major step forward in 1954.

Brown vs. Board of Education was the Supreme Court case that officially ended separate but equal. It also ended segregation in the school system. For the first time, nine African American students entered Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. The African American students dealt with numerous obstacles while attending the school, but the students' attendance at Central High was only supposed to be the first domino to fall in the desegregation of all the school systems throughout America.³

² The Scroll, ""The Niagara Movement"," *AUC Woodruff Library Digital Exhibits*, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/items/show/145>.

³ Karen Anderson, *Little Rock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

While Little Rock is the iconic case dealing with desegregating schools, it did not have a drastic impact on Milwaukee and Boston's desegregation process. Instead it would be the desegregation process that took place in Charlotte in 1969.

Attempting to desegregate the schools in the city complex busing was established to integrate the schools. Charlotte's court ordered desegregation process became the model for cities like Milwaukee and Boston, not only because they were the first, but also because the Supreme Court upheld busing as a way of integration. In the Supreme Court Case *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* the court upheld Charlottes busing plans saying that it was completely legal to implement. The court said that there were no rights being violated by assigning students to schools and busing them there.⁴ This initial plan was what structured further cities desegregation attempts.

Americans commonly believe that all schools became desegregated following the Brown Case. However, desegregation of public schools was a lengthy process that moved from the south to the northernmost cities. These northern cities are the focus of this paper, particularly the cities of Boston and Milwaukee. Both cities remained segregated until 1973 when the federal courts ruled that they must desegregate the schools. This began a lengthy process to desegregate the urban city schools, which was hindered by several barriers. Today these cities are regarded as two of the most segregated cities in America, both having some of the worst public schools in the country. Several organizations have done research that shows how

⁴ "Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education." *Oyez*. Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Tech, n.d. Dec 20, 2016. <<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/281>>

Milwaukee is one of the worst school districts in the country.⁵ The point of this research paper is to determine what decisions or factors led to the ultimate failure of school desegregation in these two cities.

Historiography

School desegregation has been approached in several different ways by historians throughout the last half-century. Integration in Little Rock took place during the first generation of desegregation in America. The process began in the South and slowly worked its way up to the north with each passing year. Every city in the string of dominos was its own unique situation. This is the reason why historians have approached the cities of Boston and Milwaukee somewhat differently during their research. The analysis done on Milwaukee has led historians to divide the desegregation process into three different periods.⁶ While historians who researched Boston have tended to focus on the complex busing that was implemented, and controlled choice. However, even though historians have focused their research on different aspects of the desegregation process, they tend to come to the same conclusion; desegregation of the schools in these cities was a complete failure.

⁵ Christian D'Andrea, "Milwaukee Ranks Second-to-Last Amongst Major Districts Where Funding Follows the Student," MacIver Institute, December 6, 2013, accessed December 20, <http://www.maciverinstitute.com/research/2013/12/milwaukee-ranks-second-to-last-amongst-major-districts-where-funding-follows-the-student/>

⁶ James K. Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee: How One City's History of Segregation and Struggle Shaped It's Schools* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2015), 2.

The three periods of Milwaukee's school desegregation consisted of no choice, which was the period of 1953 to 1976, forced choice took place from 1976 to 1990, and then choice which has been taking place since 1990 and continues to today.⁷ Each period consisted of different methods that the school board believed would eliminate the segregated schools. Each period proved to be a failure.

No choice was the initial situation of schools in Milwaukee, and restricted students to specific neighborhood schools. After it was discovered that the schools were becoming segregated during all the years prior to the court hearing in 1976, it opened the door for activists to push for further integration. The courts eventually called for the schools to desegregate during this phase, which proved to be a complete failure of desegregating the schools during the post-Brown era.⁸

Forced choice is exactly what it sounds like; students were given no choice on which school they wanted to attend. Forced choice initiated the process of forced desegregation and integration. Also, historians began to look at the creation of magnet schools that focused on teaching students specific subjects that differed from traditional schools. Those who researched the creation said that students loathed being forced into these schools. Other civil rights groups protested placing students into these hostile environments. Complicated bussing was also an issue that historians have said was a major problem. Students were being bussed long distances, and other white students were forced into schools that were to become desegregated. Whites resisted this, and eventually left for the suburbs. Again,

⁷Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

historians looked at this block of time as a failed attempt to successfully desegregate the schools.⁹

School desegregation was proving difficult in Milwaukee, and eventually led to what historians call the era of school choice. Historians have uncovered many different aspects of the choice movement that started in the 1980's and continues today. Students were allowed to choose whichever school they wanted to attend. As well, new vouchers were being offered to students to attend private schools that were previously too expensive to attend. This created an influx of students moving around Milwaukee and the surrounding neighborhoods. Cities, such as Waukesha, Racine, and Mequon began to receive large numbers of African American students. Historians observed this as another form of segregation as students were leaving Milwaukee and thus kept it segregated. Whites in the 1980's left the city in large numbers, and schools in the area had low amounts of white students. This phenomenon is often referred to as white flight. Also, because students were leaving the area it left students to struggle in schools that were still underfunded. Milwaukee was still segregated and the schools continued to struggle.¹⁰

Boston school desegregation was slightly different than Milwaukee according to historians. Boston's failures in desegregating the schools came from complex busing and difficulties in letting students choose ideal schools to attend. Historians have looked at the busing routes that were set up, and observed that the neighborhoods they planned on sending students to were never going to work.

⁹ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

African American students were being sent to all white neighborhoods, which were not going to be welcoming to students.¹¹ As soon as students were transported to the schools is when historians believe the real problems arose. As well, many of the historians' works that I have read say that there were some successful measures implemented to desegregate the schools revolving around controlled choice. However, corruption and the removal of controlled choice is what forced segregation to remain.¹² Boston was dysfunctional just as Milwaukee was, and this dysfunction remains to this day according to historians. While researchers give plenty of examples to why the segregation is remaining, they do not come to a unanimous conclusion on what decision was the defining factor that led to the failure of desegregation. What did the courts and school boards do to ultimately decide to give up on equalizing the races present in the urban city schools?

Era of No Choice

With any type of research it is important to look at the start of the event in question, and for Milwaukee I feel it's important to examine how segregated schools remained following the Brown decision. This era of segregation in the schools is referred to as the era of No Choice. Students were restricted to specific schools in their neighborhoods, and had no opportunities to attend other institutions. How was it possible to force students to attend specific schools throughout the city of

¹¹ Matthew Richer, "Busing's Boston Massacre," *Policy Review* no. 92 (November 1998): 42, accessed November 2, 2016.

¹² Willie Charles, "Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick." *Equity & Excellence In Education* 33, no. 2 (November 1998): 95, accessed November 1, 2016.

Milwaukee? The answer was quite simple. School board regulations and forced segregation into certain neighborhoods were at the root of the problem.

A term used to describe the pushing of minorities into specific areas is called Ghettoization. Ghettoization refers to the pushing of African Americans into specific areas of cities, and forcing them to remain in those particular areas. This term is especially prevalent while talking about Milwaukee, and more specifically; it's development from the 1900's until today in 2016. The presence of Ghettoization was the first process of segregating not only the city, but the schools as well.¹³

As previously stated, Ghettoization is the pushing of minorities into specific areas of town, and often referred to as de facto segregation. Reasons for Ghettoization happening in major cities throughout the northern states are due to another phenomenon that historians call the Great Migration. Jim Crow was rampant throughout the southern states, and posed a real threat to African Americans. Due to this threat millions of African Americans fled the south for developing northern cities where they believed more freedoms were present. Thus began the Great Migration, an attempt for more freedom and equality. However, this was not necessarily the case. The city of Milwaukee had no real laws that said African Americans had to live in one part of the city over the other, but rather, there were social aspects that pushed many African American families into these areas. Once the families were settled into these areas it proved quite difficult to leave the

¹³ Lois M, Quinn., "Racially Restrictive Covenants: Making of All-White Suburbs in Milwaukee County" (ETI Publications, 1979). Paper 178.
http://dc.uwm.edu/eti_pubs/178

area, or experience any form of success. All of this was especially true in Milwaukee.¹⁴

Finding adequate housing in the city of Milwaukee proved to be difficult for many of the African American families coming from the South. White property owners were hesitant to rent or sell to the incoming families or were more than willing to take advantage of the families.¹⁵ Some property owners feared that renting to African Americans would bring crime and other issues to their neighborhoods. As well, they feared that their peers would look down on them for renting to minorities. While other property owners were on the other end of the spectrum. Numerous property owners were more than willing to rent their rundown apartments and houses to African Americans at high prices due to the lack of availability. Many families had no choice but to pay those high prices for properties that were not up to code. Most of the properties were below par and not suitable for anyone to live in them. After being forced into these certain areas, there was no support from the city to make it a better area, or fund the establishments in them. Restricting families to specific neighborhoods and not keeping up the areas led to drastically unequal schools. There was drastically less money to fund the schools in the area, and poverty generally makes an impact on the overall adequacy of education systems.¹⁶

¹⁴ Quinn, *Racially Restrictive Covenants: e Making of All-White Suburbs in Milwaukee County*, 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 16.

After housing became segregated, the schools followed. This segregation was due to the rulings of the school board, which determined the schools available to students. From 1900 to 1967 the policy of the school board was that students had to attend schools that were located in their neighborhoods.¹⁷ The school board determined that this would be the most convenient way for students to attend school. Before 1976, busing students to different schools throughout the city was deemed to be too much of an inconvenience, and student's walking to school was easier. Thus students had no choice but to remain in their neighborhood schools, which led to further segregation as discussed with Ghettoization.

African American families were pushed into specific neighborhoods and found it difficult to move outside that area. Thousands of African American students in the inner city of Milwaukee had no choice but to attend a handful of designated schools on the north sides, while thousands of white students in Milwaukee were allowed to attend schools in the nicer neighborhoods throughout the city, which offered better educational environments.¹⁸ Schools from the early 1900's and on became segregated, and remained until the eventual court orders in the 1970's.

Era of Forced Integration

In 1963, numerous protests took place regarding the stability of the schools throughout the city of Milwaukee. Local lawyer and Wisconsin NAACP leader Lloyd Barbee organized several of the protests, and was responsible for the creation of

¹⁷ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 18.

¹⁸ Ibid.

MUSIC (Milwaukee United School Integration Committee). The main purpose of MUSIC was to attempt to sway the school board to change their regulations on how schools were assigned. As well, they felt that the school board was intentionally promoting segregation in the schools. Both MUSIC and Barbee attempted to persuade the school board for several years to change their regulations, but were never successful. Eventually, without any change in the schools Barbee had no choice but to bring the issues to the courts in 1976.¹⁹

Barbee brought the case to the federal court, and was titled *Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*. The case stated that they believed the school board was intentionally allowing segregation to take place in the schools. One of Barbee's opening statements was as follows,

A group of the School Board works on deciding where schools will be built and that contributes to information as to boundary changes, is involved with, the same people and they are all aware of race and utilizing. I ask that you take judicial notice that the state has participated in segregation, and the School Board, part of that cannot claim to be innocent of either this knowledge or the actual practice because of the interlocking planning and Milwaukee's housing planners, or demographic planners, could operate very greatly and I would ask you to take such judicial notice.²⁰

After reviewing the information presented to the court, Judge John Reynolds made his decision 1976. His response to the parties involved was "I have concluded that segregation exists in the Milwaukee public schools and that this segregation was

¹⁹ *Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*, 408 F. Supp. 765, 1976, March On Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, accessed October 15, 2016, <http://uwm.edu/marchonmilwaukee/keyterms/amos-et-al-v-board-of-school-dir/>

²⁰ Barbee Papers, Transcript *Amos Vs. School Board*, October 3, 1973, *March On Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project*, accessed October 15, 2016, collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/march/id/1504/rec/33

intentionally created and maintained by the defendants.”²¹ By reviewing what was presented to him he was able to see the obvious inequalities, and ordered the desegregation of the schools. Inequalities for schools included lack of adequate teachers, supplies, and condition of the building housing the students. However, the schools did not automatically change following the ruling in 1976. Numerous decisions were made to attempt school integration, and are what I am going to focus on in the rest of this paper.

One of the Milwaukee school board’s first attempted ways of desegregating the schools was by creating magnet schools and eventually the implementation of complicated busing routes to the magnet schools. What are magnet schools exactly? Magnet schools were designed to offer unique classes and programs that other schools did not. Some of these programs focused on math and science, while others focused on teaching skills that did not require further education following high school. Essentially, magnet schools are similar to what we call STEM schools today. The school board wanted these magnet schools to offer more than other schools to entice not only African American students, but white students as well.²² Magnet schools gave families mixed emotions towards their creation and implementation.

White families were interested in the intended curriculum that was being offered at the various magnet schools. It presented unique areas of education that were not previously offered to their children in their current schools.²³ However,

²¹ Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee

²² Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 51.

²³ Ibid.

even though white families were intrigued by the magnet schools, there were still some reservations regarding them. One reservation was that they did not want their children to be sent to schools predominantly populated by African Americans. Some parents appeared willing to have some integration, but still wanted their children to be with more white students than black students.²⁴ As stated by judge Reynolds, for a school to be considered integrated there only needed to be twenty to sixty percent African American enrollment. I assume most white parents preferred to send their children to schools with around twenty percent enrollment. The other major reservation that white families had was having their children bused far distances to schools throughout the city.

Magnet schools were initially designed to be voluntary based, with student's families deciding on the magnet school that offered the best situation for their children. The school board, however, would intentionally set charter schools up to push desegregation. Magnet schools in predominantly all African American neighborhoods were given unique curriculum designed to attract white students to them. While a fair amount of African Americans were willing to attend several of the magnet schools, and reach Reynolds required amount of enrollment, white students were reluctant to attend them. Thus, many of the schools were still segregated, and gave the school board no choice but to forced students to attend certain schools in the early 1980's. With this forced enrollment came a poorly planed busing route in the 1970's.²⁵

²⁴ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 66.

²⁵ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 68.

At the start of attempted desegregation in 1976 there was a total of twenty-three magnet schools throughout the various grade levels in Milwaukee. There were three high schools, four junior highs, and fifteen elementary schools. The superintendent expressed interest in increasing this number over the following years, which he did at the high school level. Soon there were a total of nine magnet high schools. The schools were to be broken up into three zones of the city.²⁶ As previously described, many of the magnet schools were spread out across the city, and once the school board began forcing students to enroll at specific schools throughout the city, busing became required.

Extensive busing networks were set up throughout the city to transport students from one point to the other. The busing rout was not only complex, but expensive as well. It cost the state around \$2.50 per week to bus a single student, and an estimated \$10,000 dollars per week to bus all of the students involved. I guess it may not have been the biggest issue for the board considering that the buses weren't getting the students to school on time to adequately learn anything. Students on numerous occasions were dropped of at their designated schools several hours late, or were dropped off far to early. The reasons for this was due to bus drivers being responsible for multiple bus routes, and could not get every student to their destination on time. As well, it took long periods of time to return students to the neighborhoods that they lived in. Some students were experiencing twelve-hour days of school due to travel times. This is a ridiculous amount of time for students to be subjugated to. While the time to get to these schools may have

²⁶ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 67-69.

been tolerable if they were adequate institutions, but many were not able to meet the goals they expressed because there wasn't enough time given to teachers to create lessons. As well, funding was not immediately available to fund the programs.²⁷

Reynolds also made it mandatory that schools needed to have around fifteen percent minority teachers at their schools. The school board in Milwaukee wanted to have it around sixteen percent. While the goals sounded plausible, it proved quite difficult to meet this requirement in several of the schools. There were not many minority teachers available, which led to the schools hiring hundreds of substitutes to fill the positions. Programs that were supposed to draw students to the magnet schools did not have the teachers required to adequately promote them. Even if certain programs had the necessary teachers to run them, they were not always up to the proclaimed standards. Teachers had little time to prepare the lessons, or even had the funding to create quality lessons. All of these issues made magnet schools a mess.²⁸

Magnet schools on paper sounded like a successful way to end segregation. Schools that taught advanced skills and subjects to its students and prepared them for the future. Who would not want to attend these schools and disregard race. However, the implementation of the schools and forced busing to them is what hindered their possible success. White and African American children were being forced to go into areas where they did not feel comfortable, and faced hostility.

²⁷ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 70.

²⁸ Ibid.

Forcing white families to do this led them flee the city for the suburbs. While the magnet schools remained, segregation was still prominent throughout the city, and forced choice was a massive failure.

Era of Choice

After the magnet schools were proving to be a failure throughout the city the school board had to come up with another way to desegregate the schools. Eventually they settled on providing the families with multiple options of schools that they could attend. Nelson has labeled this period as the era of choice for families in Milwaukee. Charter schools, public schools, and suburb schools grew in popularity during the 1990's. Each option that was provided to the students offered their own unique situations, which the school board hoped would integrate, the schools.²⁹

Charter schools were different institutions in the educational system. The state didn't fund the school or force them to follow the regulations that they made other schools in the state follow. They were privately run by organizations like local school districts or universities. Charter schools were public, but students could be denied enrollment. Several charter schools were under scrutiny because they were not required by the state to take disabled or disadvantaged students. While the charter schools were set up to provide a quality education they weren't the answer to integrating schools.³⁰

²⁹ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 145.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 146.

Similar to the magnet schools, charter schools had a tendency to further segregate the school system. Charter schools were not responsible for transportation of the students, and expected the children to find their own way to arrive at school. This one aspect automatically made it difficult for any African American children to attend them. For most families living in Milwaukee it was expected that their children walk to school, which was present during the period of neighborhood enrollment before 1976. Without the ability to transport African American children to the schools, whites dominated most charter schools. As well, for the few African American children that did attend they were grouped together into essentially separate classrooms causing segregation in a supposedly integrated school. Charter schools did not appear to be the answer for integrating the schools throughout Milwaukee.³¹

Another option given to families during this period was to attend private schools through a voucher program. Basically the vouchers were a way to cover the tuition that private schools required to attend. Money to cover these tuitions came out of Milwaukee Public Schools budget, as well as local property taxes. The idea behind offering these vouchers was to increase competition amongst private and public schools in the area. Members of the school board hoped that if students were opting to attend private schools because they offered more than it would push public schools to improve.³² However, this appears to be a flawed idea since money to improve public schools was being taken from the public schools to send students

³¹ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 146-147.

³² *Ibid.*, 147

to private schools, which makes it difficult for any improvement to take place. In 1989, there was a limit placed on how many students could use the voucher system, but in the proceeding two years the limit changed drastically.

As expected, many of the families living in Milwaukee were interested in the voucher program. It offered them the opportunity to send their children to institutions that were not previously available to them. Support of the program from families in the city is what led the program to grow. At first the program was limited to only one thousand students. It was a way to see how much demand there would be for vouchers, and to keep the schools considered private. Private institutions that were apart of the voucher program could not have more than forty nine percent of the students who were attending be on vouchers. Initial reports from parents showed overwhelming satisfaction for the program and demand for further improvement.³³

In 1987 Wisconsin elected Governor Tommy Thompson who saw the demand for the voucher program and pushed for its expansion. In 1995 the program was increased to allow for fifteen percent of the Milwaukee Public School population to use vouchers. Fifteen percent of the MPS enrollment came out to around fifteen thousand students. This was a substantial increase from the previous one thousand students allowed to use vouchers. To accommodate the growth of the voucher program more private schools were created to accommodate the demand. Various private organizations, and religious groups throughout the state created private

³³ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 150.

schools to meet the needs.³⁴

Private schools were created all around the city to meet the demand of students. However these schools were not always up to high standards, and negatively impacted Milwaukee further. Several of the new private schools did not have the funding that they needed to provide adequate lesson plans for the students who attended the school. Also, the teachers who were working at the private schools were not always properly trained to teach students of any level. While some institutions were excellent places of learning, others barely met standards. This leads into the other issue of funding. Milwaukee Public Schools were spending a lot of their budget on sending these thousands of students to private schools. With massive reductions in the budget MPS had no choice but to reduce funding for numerous programs throughout the system. This led to further decline of the still segregated schools in Milwaukee.

The last option that was given to the families throughout Milwaukee was open enrollment. Open enrollment was a statewide program that allowed students to attend any public school throughout the state. The public school or district had to agree to take the students first. With the decision to open the schools throughout the state to students it gained a lot of support. There were nearly thirty thousand students throughout the state participating in open enrollment in early two thousands. This high number of student participants was relevant in Milwaukee.³⁵

Open enrollment allowed nearly six thousand students in the Milwaukee area

³⁴ Nelson, *Educating Milwaukee*, 151.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

to attend different schools. Many of these students decided to attend schools in the surrounding suburbs. Cities like Waukesha, Wauwatosa, and Greenfield began to see steady enrollment from Milwaukee students. Both black and white students were leaving the inner city in large numbers, and would not lead to any improvement of the schools themselves.

Schools were and are funded based on the number of students attending the schools. Schools that were receiving large numbers of inner city students were receiving more funding from the state, which is a reason that more of these schools allowed themselves to be an option for open enrollment. While it seemed plausible that students could go to other schools for quality educations, it meant that thousands of students weren't enrolled at MPS, and thus city schools received less funding from the state. Without any quality funding the schools were not improving and education failed to meet adequate needs. Milwaukee was left in a troubled situation with awful schools that are still segregated.

Boston's Forced Choice

Milwaukee and Boston shared many similarities in their school desegregation process. Boston, like Milwaukee, was found to still have segregated schools throughout the city in 1973 by the federal courts. The segregated schools present in Boston went against the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965, which stated that any school with a student enrolment over fifty percent minorities was deemed segregated, and thus illegal. Morgan v. Hennigan was the title given to case that was brought to the courts in 1972, and was given to Judge Arthur Garrity. After

reviewing the information given to him, Garrity decided that the schools were segregated and that immediate forced integration must take place. Garrity from this point forward was a main figure in the process for several decades, and continuously monitored the progress.³⁶

Garrity and his associates decided that the best way to integrate the schools was through cross-town busing of students. Their plan was similar to what eventually took place in Milwaukee. Initially the plan was to move students from predominantly white neighborhoods and bus them to schools in what were considered black neighborhoods. Two neighborhoods that received a lot of focus during this time were South Boston and Roxbury. South Boston was a neighborhood occupied by a majority of white Irish Americans, while Roxbury consisted of a large African American population.³⁷ Students from these two areas were to be bused from their neighborhood schools, and balance the demographic of enrolled students. Garrity believed that this would be a successful plan, but ultimately failed miserably.

Similar to Milwaukee, families throughout Boston opposed the idea of busing their children around the city. Not only due to the fact that their children were being bused long distances, but also that their children were being forced to attend schools in areas that white families deemed dangerous. At the start of the integration process students who were assigned to bus to other neighborhood schools refused to attend. During the first day of integration only a few dozen

³⁶ Richer, *Boston's Busing Massacre*, 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

students who were supposed to attend Roxbury High showed up, while only thirteen students who were assigned to South Boston High showed up. Families drastically opposed the idea of moving their students out of their neighborhoods schools due to a strong pride that they had in them.³⁸ This pride and connection to their neighborhoods caused parents to resort to violence in protest.



Figure 1. *Anti-busing rally at Thomas Park, South Boston*. Photo by Spencer Grant, 1975, Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/8132ead3367a1a264f6040f978981e41>.

The above picture shows how much whites throughout the city opposed busing students to different neighborhoods. White protestors turned out in the thousands to protest the busing, and even attempt to stop African American students from entering the schools in their neighborhood. African American students were harassed verbally and even physically. On several occasions the

³⁸ Stacy Teicher, and Yvonne Zipp, "Closing a Chapter On School Desegregation," (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 1999): 1.

students were grabbed by protestors and beaten. School grounds were essentially turned into war zones. It became so hostile and violent that police officers and military personnel soon escorted busses to schools.³⁹



Figure 2. *Bused black schoolchildren arrive with police escort at South Boston High School during court-ordered desegregation crisis, South Boston.* Photograph by Spencer Grant, 1975, Digital Public Library of America, <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/sources/883>

Overall, busing students around the city in Boston proved to be a massive failure. Garrity hoped that the citizens of Boston would not do anything about forced integration through busing, but he soon saw that it wasn't the case. Citizens strongly opposed its implementation.⁴⁰ Busing proved to be expensive and inefficient, plus

³⁹ Matthew Delmont, "The Lasting Legacy of the Boston Busing Crisis," *The Atlantic*, March 29, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/the-boston-busing-crisis-was-never-intended-to-work/474264/>

⁴⁰Louise Day Hicks, "Letter from Louise Day Hicks to John Joseph Moakley regarding an anti-busing Wall Street Journal article by Michael Novak, 4 August

the violence associated with it did not help the cause. Officials around the city began coming to the conclusion that the answer was not through busing students. If the program were to continue it would only lead to more violence and further downward spiral to the school system. Without any possible success from the current program, school officials began to move to the choice method of integrating the schools, but with a different component than what was present in Milwaukee later on.

Controlled Choice

Similar to what was taking place in Milwaukee during the third phase of school desegregation, freedom of choice was a trend gaining steam. During the late 1980s and early 90s, the era of choice was a shared idea in major cities. While Boston did share the idea of choice like Milwaukee, it would take on a different aspect. Instead of families being allowed to choose any school in the area to attend, it was limited, but still allowed families to have some say in where their students were sent.⁴¹ During controlled choice there was some success from this period of desegregation.

While complex busing was eliminated in other cities that attempted school desegregation, it was not completely removed in Boston. Instead of completely eliminating the busing routes, they were changed and reduced. Students weren't

1975," Digital Public Library of America,
<http://dp.la/item/8f79660a23b17cb92cf8abd410167e06>.

⁴¹ Willie, *Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick*, 98.

bused across town like they previously had been. The school board saw how much of a failure that it was, and did not want to make the same mistake again. Instead busing was more centralized, and took students to schools in specific zones that were created in the city. As well, students were provided busing to areas outside the established walk zone for schools. This is where family's choice finally became a part of school decisions.⁴²

Every public school in Boston was an option for students to attend beginning in the 1980's. Boston schools did not have the right to deny any student that wished to attend their school. However, the schools were broken up into three zones to help create racial equality in them. Families were given forms that listed of all the schools that they could send their children to. Once the forms were distributed, families had the ability to create a top three list of schools that they wanted their children to attend. Boston's school board advised families to visit schools to figure out which option suited their children the best. Giving families the option to choose schools that they preferred did not make the process feel forced, and didn't give preferential treatment to any race or group. As well, parents felt more comfortable sending their children to closer schools in the city where they were not being placed into hostile situations.

Once parents submitted their top three choices the school board compiled the results and began to assign students to schools. The reason for the zones being created in the city was to make sure schools were balanced. Schools were not allowed to have a higher percentage of minorities than a school in the other zone. All

⁴² Willie, *Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick*, 98.

of the students were supposed to be distributed equally, but still allow them to go to their desired schools. However, it did not appear to be too difficult assigning students their desired schools. Most students were able to get their first or second choices throughout the city. Unsurprisingly many students wanted to remain in their neighborhoods, and over ninety percent were allowed to attend neighborhood schools. Although a large majority of students wanted to move outside their neighborhood to attend schools that they felt were better.⁴³ At first glance this appeared to be a successful plan.

However, there were several problems that stood and still stand in the way of controlled choice working. The first obstacle was the white flight that took place during the first phase of desegregation. Families were so enraged that their children were being forced to attend specific schools that they moved out of the city. White families began flooding to the suburbs to escape integration, and soon only small populations of white citizens remained with a large minority populations. While the schools were being balanced out during this phase there weren't even number of races attending each school in the way you may think. The ration of black to white students was lopsided. African American students still heavily populated schools. Thus the schools were not really desegregated and remained fairly segregated.

A second obstacle that continues to hinder the successful integration of the schools is the attempted amendments to the plan. On paper the controlled choice plan seems to be plausible idea, and if it were not for white flight be very successful. However, the school board continues to try and amend the plan with various

⁴³ Willie, *Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick*, 98.

criteria. One reason for this is possibly due to the members of the board. The mayor of Boston is the one who assigns individuals to the board. Possibly the mayor has other plans and only appoints members who will help with his agenda.⁴⁴ It is a continuous issue being discussed in the city, and has led to the desegregation process slowing down. It can possibly prevent the cities schools from ever being desegregated.

After reviewing Boston's school desegregation process I see a common trend forming in major cities attempted school integration. Boston started with the same forced integration like Milwaukee, but eventually had to change their methods. However, what was different with Boston is that they created a program that appeared to be an innovative plan in controlled choice, but were far too late to implement it, and have the right leaders to maintain it. From the information that I have sifted through, Boston appears to have been the city closest to integration of the major northern cities.

Conclusion

Throughout my research I have learned about several horrendous decisions made by the Milwaukee and Boston's school boards that have led to still segregate schools. However, one common decision that both school boards made that stands out to me as the key reason desegregation never fully happened was forced integration. Forced integration plus complex busing in the two cities made both African Americans and whites uneasy. Forced integration caused more problems

⁴⁴ Willie, *Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick*, 98.

than it solved, and led to what appears to be an impossible task of desegregating the schools.

It is impossible because thousands of white families that once populated the city left during white flight. Eventually there was hardly enough white children that could desegregate the schools. This is still true today. The cities are populated by mainly minorities, and have to attend the schools that are available to them.

Ultimately forced integration appears to an impossible task, and has led me to the only possible solution, which is voluntary but controlled integration.

As humans we like to have to have options, and when there are not it leads us to fight back. By giving families in segregated areas the ability to have some say in the process, and then control the distribution it has a shot at being successful.

Boston's controlled integration needs to be the model for desegregating schools, but must be implemented immediately in the process. If it is not implemented right away the process becomes a bus ride to further integration.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

- Barbee Papers, Transcript Amos Vs. School Board, October 3, 1973, *March On Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project*, accessed October 15, 2016, collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/march/id/1504/rec/33
- Hicks, Louise Day, "Letter from Louise Day Hicks to John Joseph Moakley regarding an anti-busing Wall Street Journal article by Michael Novak, 4 August 1975," Digital Public Library of America, <http://dp.la/item/8f79660a23b17cb92cf8abd410167e06>.
- "Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education." *Oyez*. Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Tech, n.d. Dec 20, 2016. <<https://www.oyez.org/cases/1970/281>>
- The Scroll, "The Niagara Movement," *AUC Woodruff Library Digital Exhibits*, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://digitalexhibits.auctr.edu/items/show/145>.

Secondary Sources

- Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee, 408 F. Supp. 765, 1976, March On Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project, accessed October 15, 2016, <http://uwm.edu/marchonmilwaukee/keyterms/amos-et-al-v-board-of-school-dir/>
- Anderson, Karen. *Little Rock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2010.
- D'Andrea, Christian. "Milwaukee Ranks Second-to-Last Amongst Major Districts Where Funding Follows the Student." MacIver Institute. December 6, 2013. Accessed December 20. <http://www.maciverinstitute.com/research/2013/12/milwaukee-ranks-second-to-last-amongst-major-districts-where-funding-follows-the-student/>
- Delmont, Matthew, "The Lasting Legacy of the Boston Busing Crisis," *The Atlantic*, March 29, 2016, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/the-boston-busing-crisis-was-never-intended-to-work/474264/>
- O'Donnel, Mark D. 2000. "From Our Readers: The Truth about Boston School Desegregation." *Equity & Excellence In Education* 33, no. 2: 103. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 2, 2016). <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwec.edu/ehost/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=ffe3b8f-e9a4-429f-aaeb->

e4d3aa67b087%40sessionmgr4010&hid=4206&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVpZCZzaXRIPWVob3N0LWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=3627574&db=a9h

Quinn, Lois M., "Racially Restrictive Covenants: e Making of All-White Suburbs in Milwaukee County" (1979). ETI Publications. Paper 178.
http://dc.uwm.edu/eti_pubs/178

Richards Erin, Mulvany Lydia, "60 years after Brown V. Board of education, intense segregation returns," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 17, 2014, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://archive.jsonline.com/news/education/60-years-after-brown-v-board-of-education-intense-segregation-returns-b99271365z1-259682171.html>

Richer, Matthew. "Busing's Boston massacre." *Policy Review* no. 92 (November 1998): 42. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 2, 2016). <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwec.edu/ehost/detail/detail?sid=ffea3b8f-e9a4-429f-aaeb-e4d3aa67b087%40sessionmgr4010&vid=17&hid=4206&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVpZCZzaXRIPWVob3N0LWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=1259761&db=a9h>

Teicher, Stacy, and Yvonne Zipp. "Closing a chapter on school desegregation. (Cover story)." *Christian Science Monitor*, July 16, 1999., 1, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 2, 2016). <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwec.edu/ehost/detail/detail?sid=ffea3b8f-e9a4-429f-aaeb-e4d3aa67b087%40sessionmgr4010&vid=13&hid=4206&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVpZCZzaXRIPWVob3N0LWxpdmUmc2NvcGU9c2l0ZQ%3d%3d#AN=2029718&db=a9h>

Willie, Charles V. 2000. "Trying to Move Forward While Looking Backward: A New Boston School Desegregation Trick." *Equity & Excellence In Education* 33, no. 2: 95. *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 1, 2016). <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwec.edu/ehost/command/detail?sid=5e80f68f-d0f9-4401-bc55-630b863c7462%40sessionmgr4008&vid=6&hid=4206>