School Choice and Segregation in Florida

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What is School Choice?

- **School choice**: policies and programs designed to give more choice in education
- **Charter schools**: publically funded, privately run schools that are exempt from many of the regulations of traditional public schools
- **Magnet schools**: public schools that have a particular theme or academic focus
Racial Segregation

- Racial threat theory: dominant group views an increase in minority group as an undesirable threat
- Charter schools tend to attract one specific group rather than diverse populations
Research Question

- How has school choice affected the racial unbalance over time, in individual schools, and in school districts?
Have school choice policies led to increased racial unbalance in Florida schools?

Compared racial unbalance in 2010 to 1995

1995 schools: 35.53% racially unbalanced

2010 schools: 44.79% of schools
Effect on Individual Schools

- Are schools of choice more racially unbalanced than traditional public schools?
- Compared the percent of racial unbalance for traditional, charter and magnet schools
- Percent imbalanced:
  - 41.68% of traditional
  - 56.05% of charters
  - 54.24% of magnets
Does having more schools of choice (like magnet or charter schools) in a district lead to a higher number of racially unbalanced schools?

Regression analysis comparing the percent of charter and magnet schools in a district and the percent of racially unbalanced schools.

Findings: starting at 17% every increase in charter or magnet, unbalance increases racial unbalance 1.52% and .84%, respectively.
Implications

- Many consequences to school choice that need to be studied further
- Florida schools:
  - more racially unbalanced since 1995
  - schools of choice are more racially unbalanced than traditional public schools
  - higher percentages of schools of choice leads to higher percentages of racially unbalanced schools
- Public education - the great equalizer??
Acknowledgements

- Many thanks to Dr. Carol Weissert for being a great advisor and helping me with this project as well as my thesis
- My thesis committee Dr. John Reynolds and Dr. Bob Crew
- Dr. Cherie Maestas for teaching me how to do research