

# RACIAL & ETHNIC DEMOGRAPHICS IN BOSTON SINCE 1974 DESEGREGATION/BUSING

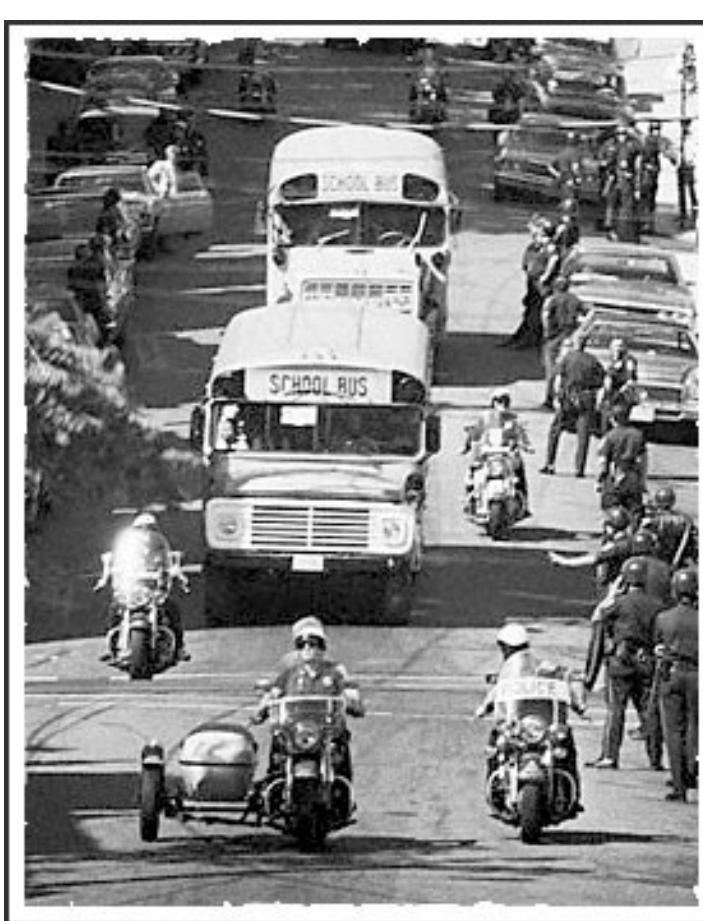
**Tufts**  
UNIVERSITY

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Class: Intro to GIS, Fall 2011  
Map projection: NAD 1983 State Plane MA  
Mainland FIPS 2001, Feet  
All maps contain MassGIS 2008 road linewidth, 2008 hydro shapefile, and 2008 park shapefile, and City of Boston hydro and park shapefiles (date unknown) from the Tufts GIS server.

## About the project

In 1974, Judge W. Arthur Garrity of the Federal District Court of Massachusetts ruled that the Boston Public School system was unequally segregated and that the school district needed to integrate students through busing. The process led to riots, violence, and white parents pulling their children out of school. The backlash was especially acute in relation to the integration of Roxbury, a poor African American community, and South Boston, a poor white Irish community. The situation only began to stabilize three years later with changes in the political leadership of Boston.

More recently, the Union for Minority Neighborhoods (UMN), a Boston organization working toward social and institutional change for minority groups, decided to organize African American parents to be more involved in the Boston Public



School system. In the process, they encountered distrust of the school system stemming from the 1974 desegregation/busing. They have since started the Boston Busing/Desegregation Project for Truth, Learning, and Change, to help "the entire city to explore the

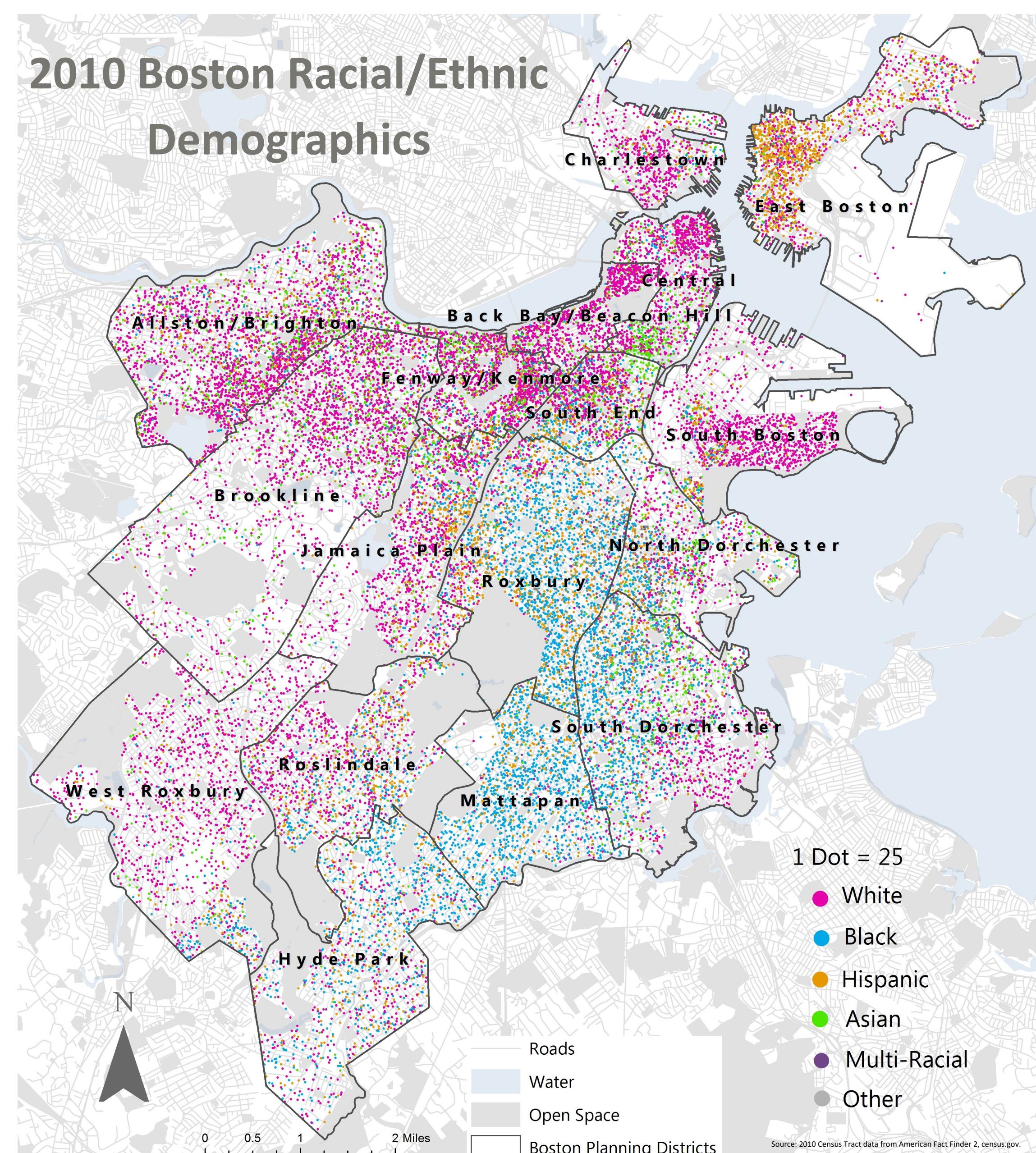


history and its implication for equity in Boston and for the future of public school education."

The maps produced by this project are meant to assist the Union of Minority Neighborhoods in understanding some of the factors that may have been affected by the desegregation/busing, or simply contribute to their understanding of the changes that have taken place since the 1970s. The first factor observed is the racial/ethnic demographic change in Boston the past forty years. The second factor is racial/ethnic breakdown and openings and closures of high schools over the past forty years.

Certainly both of these factors have changed over time, which could be in part due to the process of desegregation/busing. However, these maps are more valuable in that they create more questions than answers, and can assist in the collective understanding of Boston's history of racial demographics and public school education.

Source: PBS American Experience. 2006. School Desegregation in Boston, 1974, as part of Eyes on the Prize.



## Boston demographics

### Methodology

One part of this project involved mapping the racial and ethnic demographic Census data of Boston from the years 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2010 (1970, 1990, and 2010 are displayed here).

These three maps show race/ethnicity each displayed in a different color, with each dot representing twenty-five people.

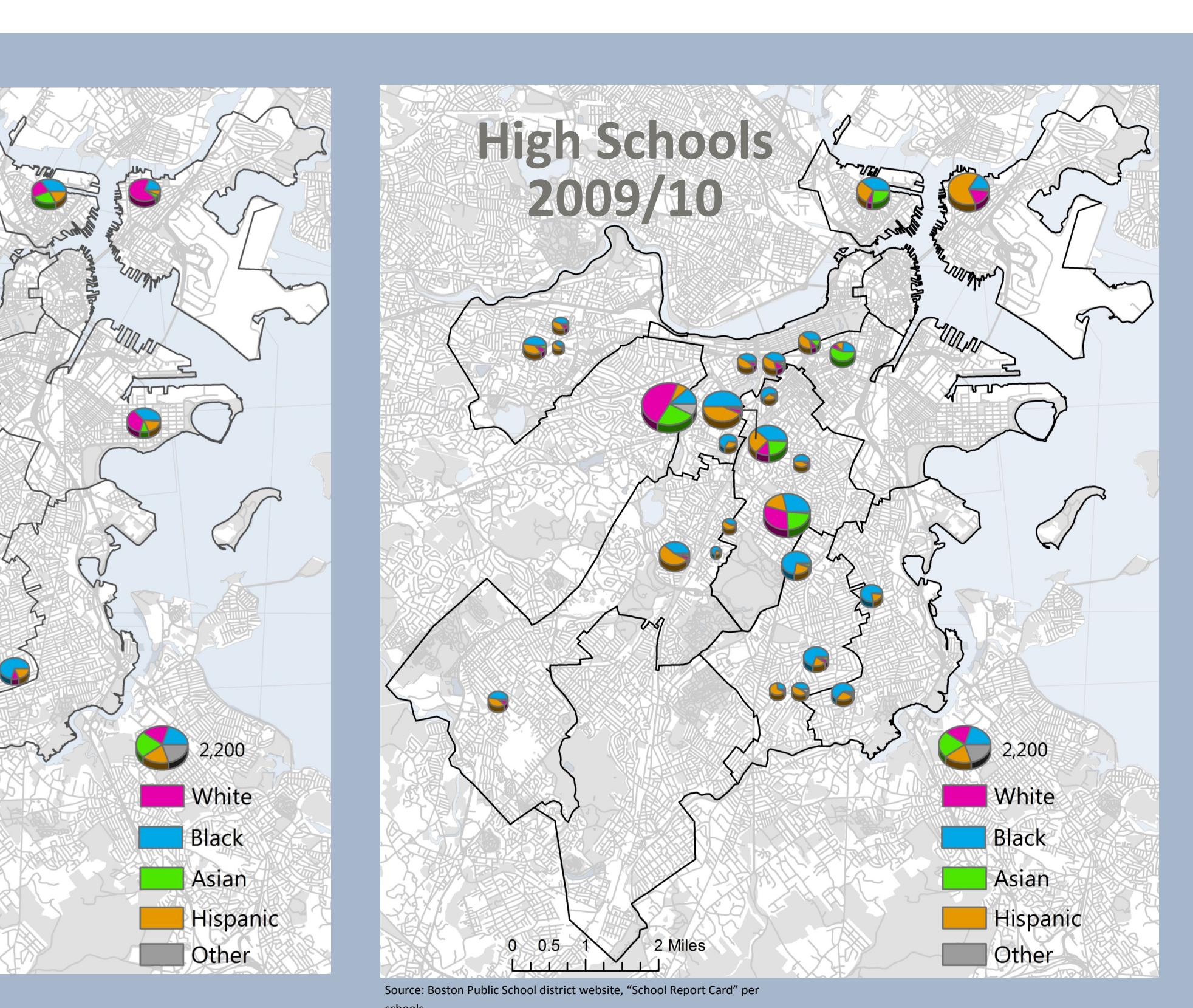
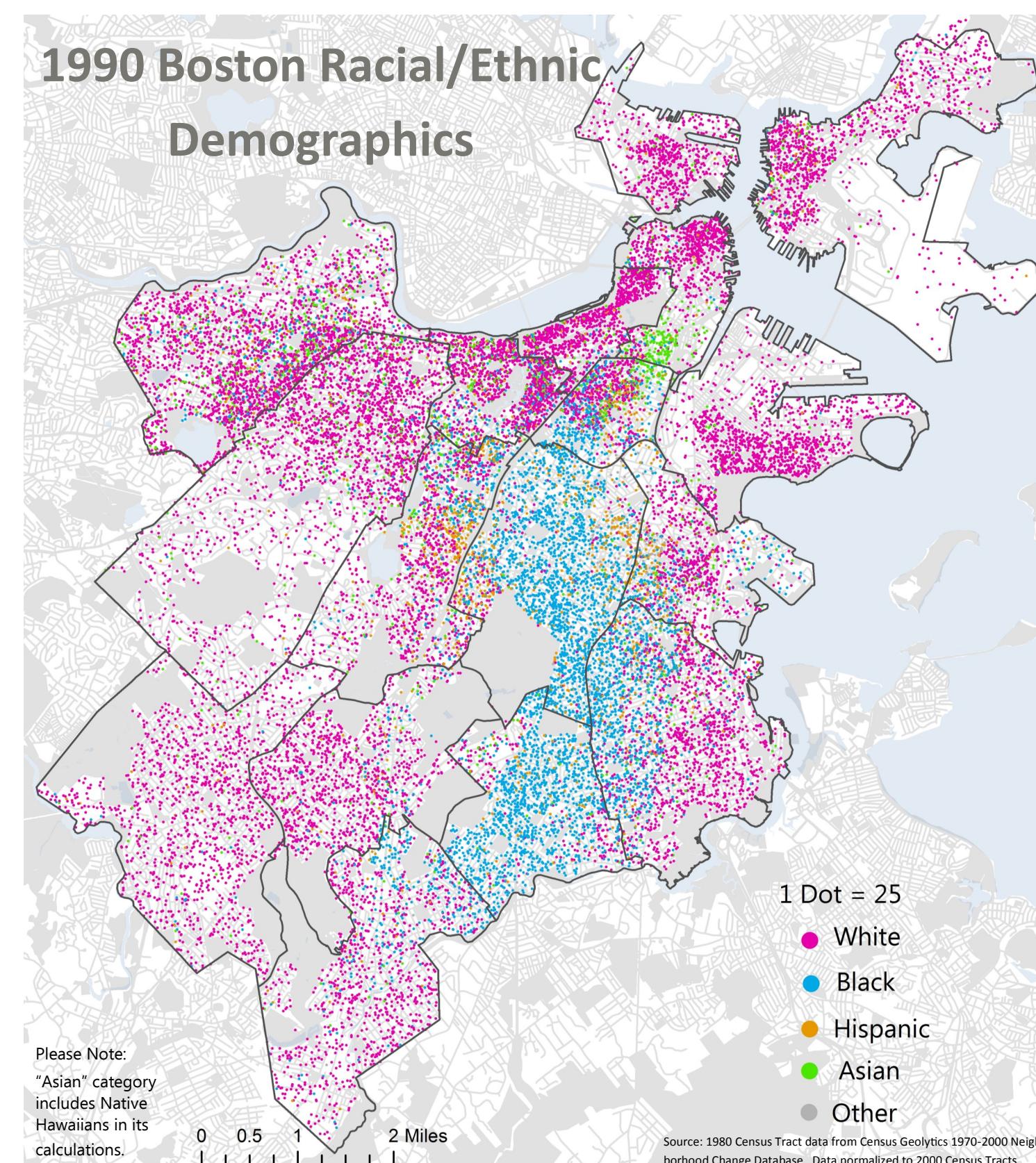
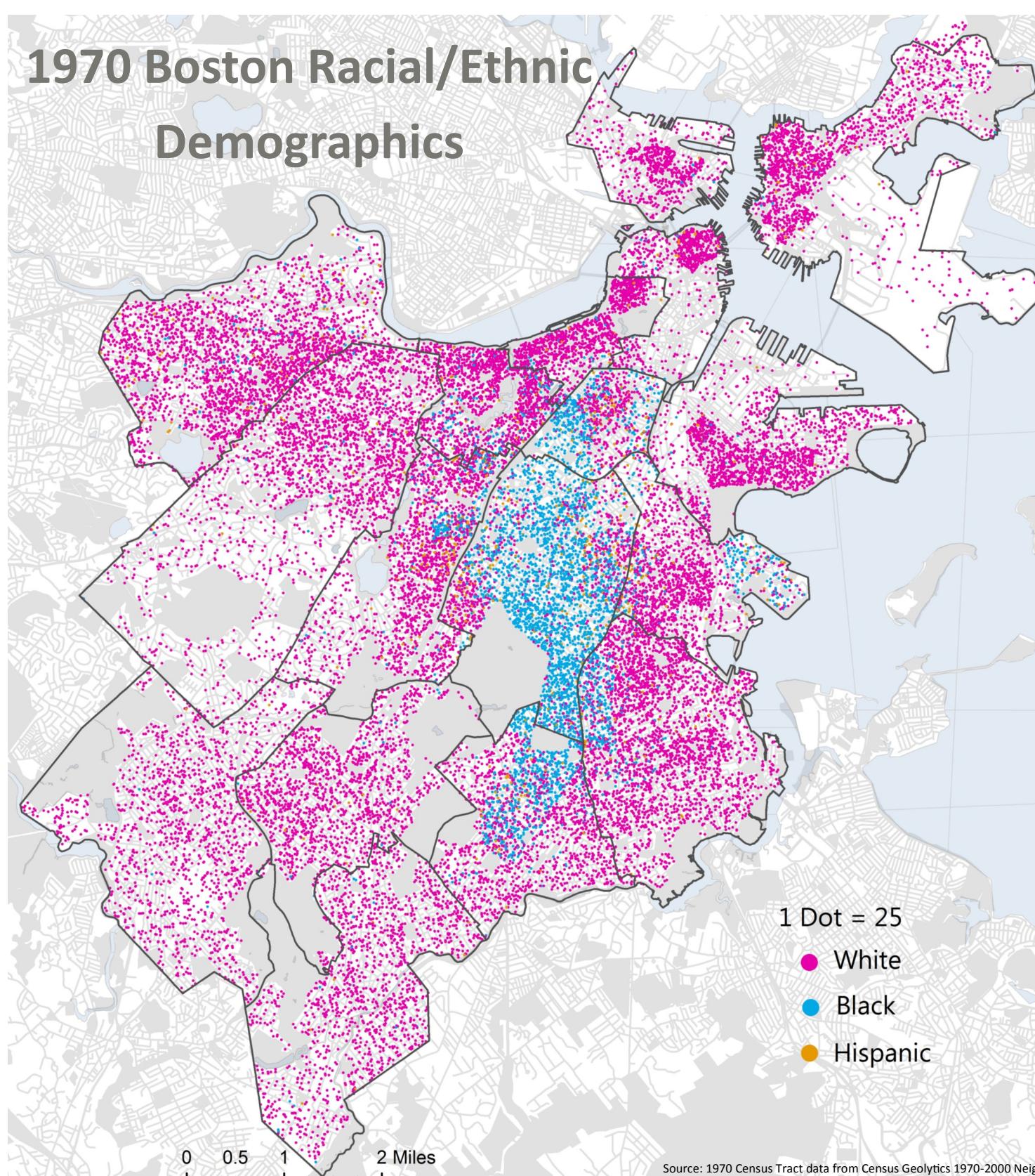
### Limitations

The main limitation in comparing these maps is that the Census has changed how it measures race/ethnicity over time. For example, the 1970 map does not include an Asian or "Other" category, and the 2000 Census was the first time people could record

them-selves as multi-racial and/or Hispanic/Latino. Each map shows 100% of the population (no overlaps between race/ethnicity groups), but any conclusions drawn should be tentative due to these limitations. Please note that the 1990 and 2000 "Other" sections include Native Americans and races classified as "Other" by the U.S. Census.

### Conclusions

Regardless of these limitations, there are some general conclusions that can be drawn from the maps. First, much of Boston, not including the northernmost edge, has decreased in density overtime. In addition, the dense, predominately Black community in Roxbury in the 1970s has become less dense and spread down overtime into Dorchester and Mattapan.



## Boston high schools & race/ethnicity

The most obvious affect of the desegregation process was on the schools themselves. These maps show Boston's high schools and their racial/ethnic breakdown for the years 1970, 1986/7, and 2009/10, with data from the Boston Public School District's website and the Boston Public Archives. Boston public schools have certainly become more diverse since 1970. However, with other factors influencing school changes over time, it is difficult to pinpoint changes in school locations and openings and closing that may have been affected by the desegregation.

Please note that not all schools for the 1986/7 and 2009/10 school years are included due to data limitations. Again, any conclusions drawn from these maps should be tentative due to changes Boston's racial/ethnic categorization over time.

