

Living and Learning on the Line: How Private Housing and Public Education Shaped Metropolitan Hartford

Jack Dougherty with Jasmin Agosto
Cities, Suburbs, and Schools Project at
Trinity College, Hartford CT
<http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/educ/css>

Conference paper presentation
for the panel
“Why Schools Matter in Suburban History and Policy”
at
The Diverse Suburb: History, Politics and Prospects
National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University
for October 22, 2009

See illustrations in the accompanying PowerPoint file at the website above

This paper begins with a question: *Why do schools matter in suburban history and policy?* In other words, how might insights into the role of education lead us to rethink our interpretations of change over time, or revisit our assumptions regarding contemporary policy dilemmas? The answer to this question can be summarized in a five-part argument:

1) Schools do not fit neatly into the conventional history of suburbanization.

When Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier* launched this field, he argued that mass suburbanization was driven by federal housing and highway policies, racism, and the American dream. But Jackson never gave a clear answer about how schools fit into this narrative, because in the immediate post-war era, many big-city school systems were still viewed as superior to their smaller suburban neighbors.

2) Suburban schools gradually shifted from migration deterrents to powerful magnets.

Initially, many early suburban schools were viewed as secondary in quality to neighboring big-city districts. Only in later decades did suburban schools begin to attract residents in their own right, with examples drawn from our historical case study of the metropolitan Hartford region.

3) Ties between suburban housing and school access fueled post-war social mobility.

A key dynamic in this story is the interplay between public school access and private housing markets, which increasingly helped solidify metropolitan space during the twentieth century. Specifically, this paper points to the growing practice of “shopping for schools”: the buying and selling of private homes to gain access to more desirable public school attendance zones. In a postwar economy that emphasized human capital, “shopping for schools” clearly became an important family strategy for

upward mobility, as higher-salary positions increasingly depended on educational credentials, which in turn relied on the status of one's public school system. During the course of the twentieth century, suburban families became more conscious of this equation: buy a home in the "right" neighborhood in order to send your children to a "good" public school, which will increase their odds of being accepted to a "top-ranked" college, and help them to land the "perfect" job. In short, the histories of schooling and suburbs come together at the intersection of educational credentialism with postwar consumerism.

4) As inequality expanded, civil rights activists widened scope from city to suburbs.

Our study takes up what historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall identifies not only as "the long civil rights movement" that stretches before and after the 1960s, but a movement that has spatially widened as well. When civil rights historians look beyond the South to the North and West, their case studies typically focus on big cities (New York, Chicago, Detroit) and overlook neighboring suburbs. But as the scope of spatial inequality widened, city-based activists began looking outward to challenge suburban privilege. During the mid-1960s in this Hartford case study, activists initially sought to persuade white suburbs to accept modest numbers of urban minority students through voluntary school desegregation. By the 1970s and '80s, their struggles expanded into wider campaigns to eliminate unequal school financing, exclusionary zoning, and later, to erase school district lines altogether. Conflicts over race shifted to broader debates over urban-suburban space, and the rights of government and property owners to control access to housing and schooling with boundary lines.

5) Today's racially "diverse suburbs" are also divided by school-related fiscal stresses.

Analyzing schooling tells us a great deal not only about the fall of cities and the rise of suburbs, but the broader transformation of metropolitan space, especially increasing variation *between* suburbs over time. What caused some previously rural towns to become elite suburban school districts during the twentieth century? Why did the fortunes of selected suburbs rise higher and faster than their neighboring communities, and how do we explain the relative decline of others in recent years? Since the "white flight" narrative only describes movement away from cities, how do we understand which factors attracted different groups of whites to resettle in certain suburbs over others? Overall, the "new suburban history" (or what some call metropolitan history) must have a richer understanding of the role of schools in order to explain regional stratification and diversity during the twentieth century.

In the sections that follow, supporting evidence has been compiled and analyzed by the lead author in collaboration with undergraduate student researchers in the Cities, Suburbs, and Schools Project at Trinity College. This conference paper brings together several strands of research that will become a book manuscript and companion website, titled *Living and Learning on the Line*.

Research assistance for this paper was provided by Jasmin Agosto, Jackie Katz, Kelli Perkins, Christina Ramsay, Cintli Sanchez, and other students affiliated with the Cities, Suburbs, and Schools project at Trinity College, with funding provided by the Trinity Faculty Research Committee.

1) Schools do not fit neatly into the conventional Jackson suburbanization thesis

The field of U.S. suburban history essentially began with the publication of Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* in 1985, which did not provide a clear answer about how schools fit into the puzzle of post-World War II mass suburbanization. Most of Jackson's book explored how other realms of public policy -- such as federally subsidized home mortgages and highways -- intersected with white families' aspirations toward the American Dream of single-family home ownership, and desire to move away from cities with increasing minority populations. In the conclusion, the author boiled down his causal analysis of mass suburbanization to "two necessary conditions. . . the suburban ideal and population growth -- and two fundamental causes -- racial prejudice and cheap housing." Public schools emerged only briefly in this otherwise comprehensive volume, in a few paragraphs after this conclusion. In the wake of the 1954 *Brown* school desegregation ruling, Jackson claimed, "millions of families moved out of the city 'for the kids' and especially for the educational and social superiority of smaller and more homogenous suburban school systems."¹

Jackson clearly identified a fundamental motivator: white middle-class families were driven by social mobility aspirations and racial avoidance. But in linking this to the *Brown* decision, he overlooked a chronological problem: most suburban public schools did not entice middle-class families to move to suburbs during the immediate postwar era. When the first mass-produced suburb opened in Levittown, New York in 1947, local school officials could not provide buildings to match enrollments, and resorted to teaching students in temporary Quonset huts, then scheduling half-day split sessions by 1953.² When another Levittown development opened near Philadelphia in 1958, sociologist Herbert Gans found that most residents moved to this suburb for lower housing costs; less than one percent cited schooling as the reason for leaving their previous residence or selecting their new community. Furthermore, the newly suburbanized school district did not meet Levittowners' expectations. Gans devoted an entire chapter to the intense conflicts he observed between the long-standing school superintendent, who had been accustomed to providing a traditional, basic education to rural families, and newly arrived middle-class parents, who demanded a more challenging and expensive curriculum to prepare their children for prestigious colleges and universities.³ Only in later years, after newcomers prevailed in most of these conflicts, did suburban schools shift to become a powerful magnet, attracting families who willingly paid higher housing costs for the privilege of enrolling their children. Schools clearly matter in suburban history, but not in the structure of stories told by Jackson and most scholars who followed in his footsteps.⁴

A parallel problem appears among educational historians, whose leading works have tended to focus on the rise and fall urban school districts, with scarcely any reference to suburbs. David Tyack's *The One Best System* (which shaped his field as much as Jackson's book did for suburban historians), explained the evolution from rural districts to urban educational systems. From the Progressive era through the immediate postwar era, most big-city public school districts stood out as the crown jewels of their metropolitan regions. Although individual school quality varied considerably inside each district, several cities featured prestigious public high schools with grander facilities, curricula, teams, and reputations than their less densely populated neighbors.⁵ Tyack's otherwise comprehensive account did not discuss a profound spatial change of the twentieth century that radically altered American schooling: mass suburbanization.⁶ Leading case studies that have followed in this field, such as Jeffrey Mirel's *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System*, have done somewhat better in this regard. Postwar

suburbanization was “both a blessing and a curse” for Detroit, he argues; rising demand for cars benefitted the city’s industry, but the municipal property tax base fell as white middle-class families and factories moved out. Increasing numbers of black working-class families arrived in the city from the South at the same time that its public school system had fewer resources to meet their needs. Furthermore, Mirel briefly links the fate of Detroit’s city schools to Michigan politics, where a rural-suburban block arose in the state legislature that opposed increasing funding for urban school districts.⁷ But for Mirel, as for most educational historians, the primary narrative focuses on the rise and decline of big-city school systems, while suburbs are relegated to the sidelines.

Perhaps this disconnect between the historical scholarship on suburbs and schools should not surprise us. Most suburban (and urban) historians have been trained almost exclusively in history departments, while historians specializing in schools tend to be housed within schools of education. While the physical distance separating these two buildings may be relatively small on most university campuses, the gap between the two bodies of literature is remarkably wide. It almost appears as if scholars have drawn disciplinary boundaries to stay out of each other’s intellectual terrain. Whereas educational historians have tended to stop at the city line, most urban and suburban historians appear to have halted at the schoolhouse door.

A handful of recent works in suburban history suggest some new ways of thinking about the importance of schools in shaping postwar suburban development. Most historians of suburbanization in the South, for example, cannot avoid discussing mandatory school desegregation orders of the 1960s and 1970s in their narratives, particularly when they encompassed an entire countywide district. But the most compelling accounts are those that draw analytical connections between cities, suburbs, and schooling. In *The Silent Majority*, Matthew Lassiter focuses on the shift in political language used by middle-class suburban white Southerners who opposed court-mandated school desegregation. By replacing overt racism with a “color-blind” rhetoric of individual merit, growing numbers of Southerners asserted their right to buy a suburban home and send their children to the neighborhood public school, linking their dual roles as parents and property owners, particularly during a time when “the physical location of homes and schools became the primary markers of a family’s socioeconomic status.”⁸ His analysis gives equal weight to race and social class as explanatory factors in the expansion of the metropolitan Sun Belt, revealing more about tensions between upper- and lower-class white neighborhoods than the simplistic “white flight” trope. Similarly, because Becky Nicolaides specifically examines a working-class Los Angeles suburb in *My Blue Heaven*, she identifies how homeowners’ fears over rising property taxes were expressed most dramatically in the local politics of education, with changing outcomes as the racial composition of schools shifted from the 1930s to the 1960s.⁹ Furthermore, Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen’s *Picture Windows* features heated battles over local education amid the growing diversity of suburban Long Island, partly because of their decision to focus on several women’s life stories, which were shaped considerably by the newly constructed suburban schools their children attended and the political identities they created with other neighbors.¹⁰

A Story of Schooling in the City of Hartford and Three Divergent Suburbs

The metropolitan Hartford region in central Connecticut exemplifies one of the most profound reorganizations of wealth in the northeastern United States. During the late nineteenth century, the capital city of Hartford was reportedly the nation’s richest city per capita, based on the financial wealth of its vibrant insurance, banking, and

manufacturing sectors, as well as the cultural contributions of prominent residents such as Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe.¹¹ Over a century later, Hartford was the nation's second poorest major city, with over 30 percent of its families living in poverty, according to Census 2000. Yet the metropolitan Hartford region -- including several rings of higher-income suburbs -- retained its rank with the fifth highest median family income in the nation.¹² Wealth did not disappear during the twentieth century, but rather it was spatially redistributed from the city to the suburbs.

Yet this redistribution did not occur uniformly; some suburbs grew richer and faster than others in the postwar era. To illustrate how public education and private housing came together to reshape the metropolitan region, this narrative sketches the trajectories of three suburbs -- Avon, Bloomfield, and West Hartford -- with respect to the central city. As the population of Hartford started to decline after 1950, all three suburbs gained residents. But each of these communities followed a different path. West Hartford was the first to develop into a suburb, during the 1920s, and eventually grew into the largest of the three outlying communities, with a middle-to-upper class population that remained virtually all white until the 1980s. Further to the west lay Avon, considered to be a rural white farming community until its meteoric rise as a leading upper-middle-class suburban destination in the 1960s and 1970s. On the city's northern border, the previously rural town of Bloomfield also experienced a dramatic transformation into a suburb, most notably during the 1950s when its population climbed 137 percent, the fastest growth rate of any Connecticut municipality during that decade. Yet when growing numbers of African Americans moved into Bloomfield and its white middle-class population fled its public schools during the 1970s and 1980s, local observers began to compare this suburb more with the declining city of Hartford than its whiter suburban neighbors.¹³ The three suburbs' levels of wealth also diverged after 1950s. Avon has enjoyed higher levels of taxable property per capita, while the economic bases of both West Hartford and Bloomfield have declined back to the county median in recent decades.¹⁴ Nevertheless, West Hartford's reputation as a "good" public school system has largely retained a politically supportive middle-class population, while the perception of Bloomfield as a "failing" school system has reduced the willingness of voters to support local educational services.

What caused these three suburbs to follow such different trajectories, creating increased levels of racial and socioeconomic stratification between them? The convergence of public school politics and private housing markets explains a large part of this story. During the postwar era, suburbs actively competed with one another to offer quality public education that would attract city residents to their individual school districts. Coalitions of local real estate interests and municipal officials devised individual "growth machine" strategies to boost the resources and reputations of their particular communities.¹⁵ Much of this activity focused on the relatively new practice of "shopping for schools" among suburban homebuyers. For example, in West Hartford, where the perception that public schools were mediocre served as a deterrent to suburban growth during the 1920s, real estate agents began to invoke selected public schools as "brand names" in private home advertisements during the 1950s and 1960s. During this same period, Avon sought to catch up and surpass neighboring suburbs by offering unique curricular offerings -- such as gifted education and foreign language instruction -- to entice upper-class professional families to relocate to their community. These coalitions also had the power to destroy a suburb's reputation. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, real estate agents were accused of steering African American homebuyers into Bloomfield, and white homebuyers outward to Avon and West

Hartford, by preying on white anxieties about racially mixed schools. From the 1980s to the present, “shopping for schools” has been fueled by the availability of standardized test score data, created through the actions of state and federal policymakers. To be sure, schools are not the only factors involved in suburban stratification, which also includes land-use decisions, transportation policies, and shifting cultural identities. But from the postwar era onward, the dynamic relationship between public schools and private housing plays an essential role in explaining metropolitan variation. Furthermore, this northern case study underscores how education and housing became powerfully linked even in a setting that remained virtually untouched by school desegregation mandates for most of the twentieth century.

2) Suburban schools shifted from migration deterrents to powerful magnets

The Weak Magnet of Early Twentieth Century Suburban Schools in West Hartford

Formerly the “Western Division” of the capital city, West Hartford took on a stronger suburban identity with its residential housing boom in the 1920s. Over 300 building permits for one- and two-family homes were issued in West Hartford in 1922, more than any other municipality in the entire state of Connecticut. Moreover, the total number that year was greater than the previous two years combined.¹⁶ Linked by convenient trolley lines to the corporate headquarters for the nation’s leading insurance and banking industries in the adjacent capital city, West Hartford seemed primed to become an ideal destination for the rising middle class. The town was the first in the state to embrace a more modernized form of local government (an elected council with an appointed manager) and adopt a comprehensive zoning plan, and it began to offer local police, fire, and road services that resembled those of the nearby city.¹⁷

But what West Hartford lacked, in the eyes of its beholders, was a quality public school system. A somber report, conducted in 1922-23 by the State Department of Education at the request of local school superintendent Lloyd Bugbee, concluded that West Hartford’s public school system was mediocre in several respects and did not live up to the town’s potential. The fundamental problem was unmanaged growth, as West Hartford had transformed from a nineteenth-century agricultural town into a residential suburban community. The steep increase in home building and population created severely overcrowded schools, run by an administrative system more suitable for a rural township than a modern school district.

West Hartford had fallen behind on both educational resources and outcomes. State officials judged the current high school building -- which lacked a library, auditorium, and gymnasium -- to be “unsatisfactory from practically every standpoint.” Only a tiny fraction of West Hartford’s high school graduates entered colleges requiring admissions examinations (2 percent), compared to higher rates in the state overall (5.5 percent) or New England (4 percent).¹⁸ On the elementary level, 3 out of 7 schools enrolled so many pupils that they operated on half-day sessions, which did not fulfill the state’s minimum requirement of four hours of instruction per day. On standardized tests, West Hartford elementary student performance did not impress. For example, on the 4th grade arithmetic exam, the district averaged a score of 17, just 1 percentage point (or 8 percent) above the “standard” score of 16.

Statistically, West Hartford had not failed. But the district had not yet risen up to its potential, according to the survey authors. “There seems no good reason for the West Hartford schools to be satisfied with merely achieving standard results,” they wrote. “Their system is potentially above the average.” Furthermore, they ventured that the

residents of this newly suburbanized district demanded more. “We judge from the nature of the community that superior schools are the desire of the people.”¹⁹ Given the sharp increase in new homes, West Hartford enjoyed a larger property tax base and could afford to spend more on its school facilities, if its elected officials exercised the political will to do so. In their present condition in 1923, West Hartford schools were not yet the magnet that eventually would attract residents from the central city. Other “pull factors” such as more affordable and attractive housing were quickly becoming more influential, but not suburban public schools.

By contrast, the city of Hartford’s public school system was still widely recognized as the best in the metropolitan region during the interwar years. In 1937, a prominent survey led by George Strayer of Teachers College declared, “Hartford is to be commended for maintaining the ‘gold standard’ of its college preparatory students,” and noted that “The reputation of the secondary schools of Hartford. . . is widely and favorably known through eastern collegiate circles.”²⁰ The flagship institution was Hartford Public High School, the second oldest public high school in the nation, widely recognized for both its classical and commercial curricula.²¹ Middle-class parents who sought a quality secondary school education (and perhaps a college education), enabling their children to advance in the labor market, looked to the city of Hartford school system and its advantages over its suburban competitors.

3) Ties between suburban housing and school access fueled post-war social mobility

Key to understanding twentieth-century U.S. urban-suburban change is the dynamic relationship between private housing markets and public education access. Both suburbs and schools grew dramatically during the past hundred years, as the nation shifted from a predominantly rural to metropolitan population. From 1910 to 2000, the percentage of Americans living in suburbs rose from 7 to 50 percent, while the percentage of teenagers enrolled in high schools grew from 15 to over 95 percent.²² With this growth in private consumption and public education came the practice of “shopping for schools”: the buying and selling of private homes to gain access to more desirable public school attendance zones. During the post-World War II era, suburban families became more conscious of this strategy for upward mobility: buy a home in the “right” neighborhood in order to send your children to a “good” public school, which will increase their odds of being accepted to a “top-ranked” college, and help them to land the “perfect” job. As overt racial discrimination became less acceptable over time, schooling and housing boundary lines became a more legitimate way for rising American families to defend their privileges and distance themselves from others. Higher-educated families saw returns on this investment as the U.S. economy shifted from manufacturing to the knowledge sector. In 1967, a household with a bachelor’s degree earned 1.6 times more than one with only some high school; by 2007, that same household earned 2.8 times more. Today, 27 percent of all public school parents report having moved to their neighborhood to attend their current school; the rate is significantly higher for college-educated, white suburban parents.²³ While suburban growth was also fueled by several non-school factors, we cannot fully explain U.S. suburban growth -- and metropolitan inequality -- without linking it to the interconnected history of public schooling and private housing. . In short, the histories of cities, suburbs, and schooling come together at the intersection of educational credentialism with post-war consumerism (Labaree 1988, Cohen 2003).

Selling Public Schools through Private Real Estate in West Hartford

After World War II, West Hartford experienced a second suburban boom, the combination of growth in both the residential and commercial sectors. But town leaders continued to question whether the town had kept pace with the quality of education they expected in their rising suburban community. A 1950 *Life* magazine survey, titled "How Good is Your School?", inspired Bice Clemow, publisher of the *West Hartford News* weekly, to launch a series of investigative articles about the quality of local public education.²⁴ Although West Hartford now had 13 school buildings, Clemow found numerous examples of low standards in school facilities, curriculum, and teacher salaries. "If we lived in a mill town, where the income level was modest, it would not be startling to find that we could not afford the best in public education," Clemow concluded. "To document that we have grade B- secondary education available in West Hartford is a shock of another order."²⁵

Status anxiety over suburban schools also appeared in the real estate market. As school enrollments continued to grow during the 1950s, and town officials eventually agreed to fund new school buildings to address overcrowding, a heated controversy arose over redistricting. In 1954, several parents objected to proposed changes in school attendance zones, particularly a plan to move sixth grade students from overcrowded elementary schools to the Talcott Junior High School, located on the town's south side. At a board of education meeting, one of the parents reportedly said, "that whenever real estate men sell property, they tell their clients that they (purchasers) are in the Sedgwick, Webster Hill, or Bugbee areas." All three of these elementary schools were located on the western side of town, where new home construction was most prevalent. The proposed redistricting would remove children from the schools that real estate agents had promoted as the most highly desirable ones, and parents strongly objected to losing access to the public neighborhood schools that they had "paid" to attend. Superintendent Thorne blamed real estate agents for creating what the press labeled as "social class consciousness" among West Hartford residents. He asked: "Doesn't it boil down to some people thinking there is more prestige to going to one school than another?"²⁶ His principled stand was not persuasive to parents who opposed redistricting, and who probably paid more for a home located near what they perceived as a better elementary school.

Suburban real estate agents ignored Superintendent Thorne's criticism and intensified their marketing tactics during the 1950s and '60s. They increasingly engaged in "branding" access to selected West Hartford public schools as part of the private real estate transaction. Based on a sample of Sunday newspapers from 1920 to 1990, the number of suburban real estate advertisements increased across the Hartford metropolitan region over time, particularly during the baby boom years. But West Hartford advertisements stood out from the others. During the postwar era, this suburb had the highest proportion of real estate ads that mentioned a specific school by name, peaking at 38 percent in 1965. Real estate agents who placed these advertisements prominently included the name of the public school attendance zone, seeking to increase the value of the private home in the eyes of prospective homebuyers.²⁷ Simply living in the suburb of West Hartford was not sufficient; one also had to live in the "right" neighborhood, in order to attend the "right" school.

In these postwar suburban advertisements, real estate agents generated a private-public consumerist discourse at an unprecedented scale. During the 1920s housing boom, none of the West Hartford ads in this sample ever mentioned a school. In the city of Hartford during the same decade, only 4 percent of the ads mentioned schools, including both generic references (such as "near school") and specific schools

by name. Therefore, the postwar language of “selling” access to a specific public school as part of the real estate transaction was a fairly new phenomenon in the metropolitan Hartford region, and part of a larger strategy to stimulate suburban growth by associating home ownership, educational investment, and upward mobility.

Suburban Competition for Upper-Class Families in Avon

In the nearby community of Avon, a related but different strategy arose for attracting upper-class families. During the first half of the twentieth century, this sparsely populated farming community did not resemble the elite suburban school district that it would later become. Avon continued to rely on some one-room wooden schoolhouses (with one teacher instructing eight grade levels of students) as late as 1949, long after most other suburban towns had discontinued their use. Furthermore, Avon had no high school building of its own until 1958. Prior to its opening, students desiring to continue their secondary school education rode a bus to a neighboring district, where they attended high school based on a tuition arrangement between the towns. By several accounts, Avon’s public school system acted more as a deterrent than a magnet for suburbanization in the immediate postwar era. Clifford Floyd, an insurance accountant who moved from Hartford with his spouse and three young children to this suburb in 1952, explained, “We didn’t come to Avon because of the schools. We just thought it would be better to have a lot more land for the kids to play around in.”²⁸

Both Avon’s demographics and its public education politics were rapidly transitioning during the 1950s. The former farming community now counted more than two-thirds of its resident workforce who commuted daily to jobs outside its borders, working as lawyers, teachers, insurance workers, and engineers in Hartford and other municipalities. Clashes arose between established farm families and newcomers from the city, who disagreed on topics ranging from barn odors to local governmental services. Through the first half of the twentieth century, Avon’s fiscally conservative town leaders had an historical aversion to borrowing funds. Also, the town’s refusal to accept school construction aid during the New Deal had delayed efforts to open their own high school. But by the postwar era, newcomers eventually persuaded the town to construct new elementary schools, paid for by bond issues and state aid.²⁹ Modern educational facilities soon opened near newly constructed suburban housing developments.

In 1960, Avon sought to leap ahead of its suburban competitors by launching two widely-publicized curricular innovations designed to attract more privileged families: gifted education and foreign language instruction. With barely 1,100 students in the entire school district, Avon town leaders proudly announced their “imaginative” step to introduce gifted education to selected students in its elementary schools, one of the first districts to do so in the entire state of Connecticut. At the high school level, Avon created foreign language laboratories -- featuring Latin, French, Russian, and later Chinese and Japanese -- with federal funding from the National Defense Education Act. School leaders organized “study and travel abroad” programs for selected students to visit France, Japan, and the Soviet Union. Both gifted education and optional foreign language instruction allowed Avon to offer a different curriculum for upper-class students and those from farm families. By 1965, Avon proudly noted that public and private schools in neighboring towns were now sending their students to participate in its rich curricular programs, a stark reversal from the days when the lack of a high school required Avon to bus its students in the opposite direction.³⁰

Avon school officials and real estate agencies actively cooperated to promote their supercharged school district, which now surpassed the type of curricular offerings found in more established suburbs like West Hartford. In 1968, Avon hired a new school superintendent, Herb Pandiscio, who partnered with local real estate firms to market Avon's public schools as a valuable commodity, included within the sales price of a private home.³¹ Their strategy was successful. By the 1980s, real estate agents publicly observed that Avon had "become very prestigious" for corporate executives moving into the region "because of its schools" as well as recreational facilities and proximity to Hartford. Even during a down market in the early 1990s, Avon maintained the highest average home sales price in the sixteen towns covered by the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors. "I think Avon has always been considered one of the key executive towns," reflected Charles Hartigan, the assistant manager of local real estate firm, ". . . and certainly the school system plays a big role in that."³²

Suburban Block-Busting and School-Busting in Bloomfield

But not all suburbs remained as white and wealthy as West Hartford or Avon. The neighboring community of Bloomfield, located immediately north of Hartford, reveals a more conflicted story of suburban rise and decline. In the 1930s, this agricultural town constructed its own high school, establishing a public education infrastructure ahead of Avon. During the 1950s, Bloomfield's population leaped from 5,746 to 13,613 -- a 137 percent increase, the highest growth rate of any municipality in the state that decade. Bloomfield launched an ambitious elementary school construction campaign to keep up with its rising student population, and paid for all school improvements from its expanding property tax base.³³

Real estate agents generally refused to sell suburban homes to any Black family in the metropolitan Hartford region during the 1950s. But agents shifted their discriminatory stance in the early 1960s, by quietly agreeing to sell properties to Blacks in Bloomfield, which already had small minority population engaged in agricultural work. Middle-class African-Americans like Spencer Shaw, a librarian who described having had "several refusals before from real estate people," finally succeeded in moving his family from Hartford to a home he bought from a Greek couple in Bloomfield. But Shaw's purchase sparked a racial transition on the street. "I think within about two months, four or five of the other families moved out," he recalled.³⁴

By the late 1960s, several Bloomfield residents charged that real estate agents were engaging in "block-busting" tactics, where they intentionally sold homes in white neighborhoods to black families, then pressured whites to sell their properties at below market value in order to "get out" before more blacks moved in and their home values dropped even further. Like "racial steering," this illegal housing practice also involved public schools. John Kever, a white homebuyer who asked to look at homes in Bloomfield, reported that several salesmen "made innuendos about the school system" and warned that his daughter might be subject to recent "attacks on white girls in the Bloomfield schools." Real estate agents showed homes to Kever in Avon and West Hartford, and spoke about these suburbs in "glowing terms," but provided no favorable information about Bloomfield.³⁵ In 1973, Bloomfield town leaders and fair housing advocates filed federal complaints, and a year later the U.S. Justice Department brought official charges of racial steering against seven major Hartford-area real estate firms.³⁶ Despite efforts by many black and white Bloomfield residents to voluntarily integrate schools and maintain neighborhood stability, the dominant white racial fears caused a collapse in the reputation of the suburban school system.³⁷ Whites fled the

Bloomfield schools at rates much faster than the overall suburban population during the 1970s, underscoring the powerful ties between public education and private real estate.

Narrowly defined, block-busting only affected the residents of one block at a time: the anxious whites homeowners who feared that living on the same *street* with blacks would lower their property values. But in Bloomfield, white flight occurred rapidly across large sections of this community, even where blacks had not moved next door, but rather into the same elementary school attendance zone. Perhaps a more appropriate label would be *school-busting*, where real estate agents' actions sparked the departure of anxious white homeowners who feared that sending their children to the same *school* with blacks would lower the value of their educational credentials.³⁸

Unlike Southern school districts that operated under court-ordered desegregation during the 1960s, school districts in metropolitan Hartford functioned with relatively few governmental mandates on race and education. Of course, during the civil rights era, activists and media focused attention on growing racial differences between schools in Hartford, and between city and suburban school districts. But state officials did not require much to be done about it during this period. In 1966, Connecticut encouraged suburban districts to voluntarily participate in the Project Choice transfer program by accepting Hartford minority youth into their schools. Yet the program's numerical impact remained small (at its peak, only 5 percent of Hartford students were involved), districts freely dropped out, and not a single white suburban child was sent to attend a Hartford school. Although the Connecticut legislature did pass a mandatory racial imbalance law in 1969, it had very little effect. The law required individual school minority enrollments to be within 25 percentage points of each district's average, but since this regulation was applied separately to each district, it had no impact across municipal boundaries. In 1970, for instance, all West Hartford schools were required to be within range of its district minority average (3 percent), while next door in the city of Hartford, schools needed to be within range of a higher district minority average (67 percent). Local civil rights activists filed a federal school desegregation lawsuit in 1970, charging that the racial disparities between Hartford and suburban schools were unconstitutional. But that suit evaporated after the 1974 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on *Milliken v. Bradley*, which stated that city-suburban desegregation remedies were unlawful unless suburban intent to segregate could be proven.³⁹ In fact, no school desegregation lawsuit for the Hartford region ever came to trial until the *Sheff v. O'Neill* case in state court in 1992, long after suburban stratification had solidified. As a result, mandatory school desegregation simply was not a driving factor in the shaping of metropolitan Hartford; other links between housing and education were clearly influential.

Shopping for Test Scores in West Hartford

From the 1980s to the present, the process of "shopping for schools" in suburbs like West Hartford became more commonplace, even as they took on a different form. Rather than directly advertising access to specific public schools in local newspaper, realtors and homebuyers began to communicate through the legally sanctioned vocabulary of state standardized test scores. Of course, testing itself was not new. Generations of students had endured standardized assessments since the Progressive era. But after the 1980s, state and federal politics of school accountability heightened both public awareness of and access to school-level test scores. Private real estate interests embraced the testing movement as an acceptable means of communicating

with consumers about how to compare the quality of one neighborhood school over another. In the minds of real estate agents, providing objective school data did not violate fair housing law and its restrictions on what they could say about the qualities of a neighborhood. Instead, real estate agents could now disseminate school-level data, because that was exactly what the state government was doing.

In West Hartford during the early 1970s, prior to the current school accountability movement, individual school test scores were not nearly as accessible as they have become today. For example, when a local parent inquired about school test scores in 1973, the West Hartford Board of Education unanimously reaffirmed its policy of “not releasing school scores on a town-wide basis.” Instead, the district provided data quietly, to individual parents who requested it directly from the superintendent’s office.⁴⁰ But even for consumers who took the initiative and successfully obtained local test score results, the data were not comparable with other districts, each of which used their own preferred type of tests. A decade later in 1985, the state legislature established its first standardized exam, the Connecticut Mastery Test, for 4th, 6th, and 8th grade students. Nevertheless, Connecticut lacked a uniform reporting system to disseminate results in the public domain for seven more years. Students took standardized tests, but it was extremely difficult for ordinary citizens to compare results in meaningful ways. The politics of public school accountability had not yet taken hold.

In the meantime, private real estate interests stepped in to feed the data-hungry market of prospective suburban homebuyers. One of the pioneers was Neil Rosen, a former schoolteacher who in 1989 created the National School Reporting Services, Inc., based in Greenwich, Connecticut. Since school quality and real estate values were directly linked, he reasoned, prospective homebuyers needed reliable information to make worthwhile investments, and real estate agents were the crucial link. Four years later, Rosen and his staff of twenty researchers collected and sold packaged data about school performance, curriculum, and extracurricular activities to about 5,000 real estate agents along the East Coast. Suburban real estate firms subscribed to Rosen’s service for \$395 annually, with agents in each office paying an additional \$75 per year for unlimited individualized school reports. Margaret O’Keefe, one of the 24 agents at West Hartford’s TR Preston Realtors firm who subscribed to the service, marveled at its convenience. “I’ve used it with several out-of-town buyers,” she explained, “and even with people who don’t have children, or have preschool children.”⁴¹

The other key reason why realtors paid to deliver school-level data to customers was to avoid accusations of racial steering. Prospective buyers continually asked questions to real estate agents about schools. But the Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited agents from overtly mentioning the demographics of schools, and the threat of enforcement discouraged many from voicing any opinion about the quality of different schools. “For real estate agents, the service is a boon,” Rosen told a local reporter, “allowing them to get around ticklish federal restrictions on what agents can tell clients about local school systems.” Lynda Wilson, the President of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors, agreed. “Agents get so many questions from buyers about schools, and they are very conscious and concerns about giving out misleading information,” she explained. “They are afraid if they give wrong information, they can be accused of steering,” a charge that federal officials had investigated in suburban Hartford in previous years. Margaret O’Keefe, who had previously served as PTO president of two West Hartford schools, understood new federal restrictions to mean that she could share objective education data with clients, but not her own subjective

judgments about the quality of individual schools. “You’re treading on very dangerous ground,” she observed, “unless you have facts.”⁴²

State education policies for increased testing data and public school accountability also served the real estate industry and its marketing efforts towards homebuyers who were “shopping for schools.” In 1990, the state legislature passed a bill requiring each school and district to submit “strategic profiles” with data about resources and school performance in a uniform format, beginning in 1992. State Senator Kevin Sullivan, the former mayor of West Hartford, helped author the bill and promoted its principle: “to give parents and the community a better sense of what the needs are [and of] how a school is doing.” But the potential for direct school-to-school comparisons made several local educators uneasy. The Connecticut State Department of Education’s chief of research, Douglas Rindone, predicted that “PTOs are going to be interested in [these school reports], real estate agents are going to be interested in them, the press is going to be interested in them.” Linda Cullen, an agent with Century 21 Bushnell Realty in the nearby suburb of Wethersfield, agreed. “We will definitely be using it,” she confirmed. “I have gone to boards of education before, and I’ve been surprised they have so little information.”⁴³

Although Connecticut’s “strategic school profiles” first became available in 1992, they did not immediately achieve wide circulation. While hundreds of Connecticut real estate agents read and distributed Rosen’s privately-issued school reports, the typical home buyer still had to request the document directly from local school superintendents, who “usually charge nominal fees” for photocopying, noted one journalist.⁴⁴ In the mid-1990s, the daily newspaper published a table of school-level elementary test results for West Hartford only once a year (typically during the busy Christmas and New Year holiday season), in a local edition delivered only to West Hartford and nearby towns.⁴⁵

But the increasing politics of school accountability, media interest, and the Internet boom of the late 1990s all set changes into motion. In 1995, the Prudential Connecticut Realty company opened its first experimental “computerized library,” located at their West Hartford office, for potential buyers to browse photographs of homes and “information on communities’ demographics and school systems.”⁴⁶ The Connecticut Department of Education launched its own website in 1996, and began to include test score data for individual schools for the first generation of web surfers in 1997.⁴⁷ By the year 2000, homebuyers with computer access could easily and instantly view details about local schools, whether located around the corner or across the country. Part of the data revolution was driven by state education agencies, to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. But non-governmental education advocates and private real estate interests also made significant contributions. GreatSchools.net, founded in 1998, currently describes itself as “the nation’s premier provider of K-12 school information to parents”. This non-profit organization receives funding from philanthropists and advertisers, including partnerships with several leading real estate firms. Its website features school-level test score and demographic data, and claims to have reached 33 million users in 2006. Parents in Connecticut suburbs actively began using the Internet to offer their own comments (and read opinions by others) about the quality of their neighborhood schools.⁴⁸

Over time, suburban Connecticut families have become very conscious of the public school access that they have “purchased” through their private homes. Awareness heightens whenever discussions occur about redistricting school attendance zones. In 1995, for instance, West Hartford citizens engaged in a heated debate over

plans to redraw elementary school attendance boundaries, motivated by efforts to relieve overcrowding in schools located in less affluent neighborhoods and to comply with Connecticut's 1969 racial balancing law. West Hartford parents clashed over different redistricting proposals, with some public meetings attracting up to 500 people. At one meeting, a parent from a more affluent neighborhood who questioned the audience asked: "How many people moved here to West Hartford specifically because of the quality of the neighborhood schools?" According to a local reporter, "Hands shot up around the packed floor of the town hall auditorium," demonstrating the intensity of the perceived link between public school quality and private residential choice.⁴⁹

Suburban parents in towns like West Hartford have become motivated by both social class aspirations and racial fears. As this formerly all white suburb grows more diverse (with a 34 percent district-wide average minority enrollment in 2007), racial influences become even more apparent. A recent econometric study of West Hartford single-family properties sold between 1996 and 2005 asked how much buyers were willing to pay for a home on the higher-scoring side of an elementary school attendance boundary, controlling for the characteristics of the house, neighborhood, and school racial composition. The correlation was positive and significant: a one standard deviation in elementary test scores produced a 2 percent increase in the price of an average home during this decade. But further analysis revealed that during the latter half of the period (2002-05), the school's racial composition became much more influential, with a one standard deviation lowering the price by about 4 percent of the cost of an average home. In other words, as suburban homebuyers (the majority of whom are still white) make decisions about where to live in West Hartford, the sales data suggests that they are becoming even more sensitive to the racial composition of their children's potential classmates than their test scores.⁵⁰ Whether white suburban families have been motivated more by racial fears or social class aspirations (or some combination of the two), the common thread is the bond between public education and private housing, which has grown tighter during the twentieth century.

4) As inequality expanded, civil rights activists widened scope from city to suburbs

A richer understanding of schooling helps extend U.S. civil rights history from the cities to the suburbs. Our project takes up what historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall identifies not only as "the long civil rights movement" that stretches beyond the 1960s, but a movement that has spatially widened as well.⁵¹ While the civil rights literature has expanded to the North (Theoharis and Woodard 2003), its leading case studies concentrate on major cities (New York, Chicago, and Detroit) with little attention to adjacent suburbs. Two exceptions are Andrew Wiese (2004) and Tom Sugrue (2008), who both identify racially transitional Northern suburbs as key civil rights battlegrounds, but their broad overviews do not explore how, in any given metropolitan area, civil rights activism shifted its focus over time from the central city to the suburbs

When Hartford's wealth was spatially redistributed from city to suburbs, and the power structure of inequality moved to the suburbs, civil rights activists were challenged to rethink their ideas and strategies to keep pace. City-based protests began looking outward to challenge suburban privilege. In the mid-1960s, Project Concern activists sought to persuade white suburbs to accept modest numbers of urban minority students through voluntary school desegregation. By the 1970s and '80s, their struggles expanded into wider campaigns to eliminate unequal school financing, exclusionary

zoning, and later, to erase school district lines altogether. Conflicts over race shifted to broader debates over urban-suburban space, and the rights of government and property owners to control access to housing and schooling with boundary lines.

5) Today's racially "diverse suburbs" are also divided by school-related fiscal stresses

Tracing the school-housing relationship across three different Hartford suburbs during the postwar era illustrates its changing forms and growing importance. In West Hartford, real estate agents marketed access to desirable public schools through private home advertisements, and were early adopters of state-generated test score data as a means of selling neighborhood schools without violating fair housing law. In Avon, public school officials openly cooperated with real estate agents to promote the district for mutual benefit, while in nearby Bloomfield, agents clashed with the town officials by scaring and steering away white homeowners, contributing to the collapse of the district's reputation. The connection between private housing and public schools has helped increase the region's racial and economic stratification -- not just between the city and suburbs, but also between suburbs.

In *American Metropolitanities*, policy analyst Myron Orfield categorizes suburbs into six types, depending on the level of fiscal stress caused by cost of educating their current student population amid the limits of their local tax base. In most states, suburban school districts effectively compete against one another to attract the "best" families for their fiscal health. Conversely, when suburbs enroll larger numbers of students from lower-income families (who tend to be more expensive to educate), fiscal pressures to increase property taxes may drive off established homeowners, particularly when their racial or language background differs from the newest generation of residents.⁵² These fiscal stresses became more salient as per pupil school expenditures rose sharply during the postwar era (from about \$200 in 1950 to over \$10,000 today in the Hartford region), devouring a larger share of local tax revenues.

Within these shifting metropolitan dynamics are suburban families, with dual identities as property owners and parents. What motivated them to become so deeply intertwined with the suburban housing? A narrow view of home ownership looks only at property values, with an eye toward the future resale value of an individual home. But a broader perspective recognizes suburban homeownership as a middle-class strategy for upward mobility, particularly when buying private real estate in a certain suburban area meant buying access into a more desirable public school attendance zone. In this respect, suburban families could justify a higher home mortgage payment as a long-term investment in their children's schooling, with the promise of increased future status and earnings.

This promise came true for some families during the postwar era, particularly due to what some historians have labeled as the "human capital revolution."⁵³ As the U.S. economy shifted from the manufacturing to the knowledge sector, workers who stayed in school longer saw significant financial returns on their parents' investment in their education. In 1967, a household with a bachelor's degree earned 1.6 times more than one with only some high school; by 2007, that same household earned 2.8 times more (as shown in chart 5).⁵⁴ Educational attainment became an even more reliable strategy for one's family to get ahead in American society, especially as the equation between suburban homes, schools, and children's future earnings paid increasingly larger dividends over time, thereby creating more inequality.

This explains why the history of schooling matters to the new suburban history, and vice versa. For families with children, buying a home meant more than investing in

a piece of real estate. During the later decades of the twentieth century, private suburban homeownership -- which increasingly guaranteed access to more desirable public schools, and in turn, improved chances of acceptance into a better college -- became the most reliable means of transferring middle-class privilege to one's children. Within this context, many white families became more anxious about any perceived marker of inferiority in their schools, such as the presence of black children, even those living several blocks away, yet within the same attendance zone. Indeed, the educational credentials market was not entirely new, and historians have identified its origins in late nineteenth century academies and high schools.⁵⁵ But this education market exploded during the era of postwar consumerism.⁵⁶ In order to fully understand U.S. metropolitan development and variation, we need to bridge the gap between suburban history and educational history, by examining the growth of shopping for private homes and public schools.

¹ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 287, 289-90.

² Jon C. Teaford, *The Metropolitan Revolution: The Rise of Post-Urban America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 78-79

³ Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), pp. 31-41, 86-103.

⁴ Two recent exemplars of suburban history barely mention schools in their otherwise illuminating accounts. In Robert Self's *American Babylon: Race, Power, and the Struggle for the Postwar City in California* (Princeton University Press, 2003), he examines the suburban roots of the Proposition 13 property tax revolt and curtailment of governmental services, yet refers only once to public schools (p. 166), according to reviewer Michael Flamm, "Destructive Winds," *Reviews in American History*, 32, no. 4 (2004): 552-7. Similarly, David Freund's *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (University of Chicago Press, 2007) explores how white views of race and private property evolved over time in suburban Detroit, yet makes only one brief reference to neighborhood schools, pp. 339-40.

⁵ David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

⁶ Harvey Kantor, "In Retrospect: David Tyack's *The One Best System*," *Reviews in American History* 29 (2001): 326. Tyack's book examined postwar demographic and economic changes in cities (pp. 276-78), but did not discuss how suburbanization altered the politics of education.

⁷ Jeffrey Mirel, *The Rise and Fall of an Urban School System: Detroit, 1907-1981* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 218-21, 244-50, 294-98.

⁸ Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 9. Compare with a Southern urban analysis by Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁹ Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 156-68, 286-94. See also social class comparisons of public education struggles across several regions in Teaford, *The Metropolitan Revolution*, pp. 34-37, 78-84, 152-6.

¹⁰ Rosalyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). See also school integration campaigns in Northern

suburbs, often led by women activists, in Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (Random House: New York, 2008), chapters 6 and 13. For an extended historiographical analysis with additional examples of cross-over scholarship, see Jack Dougherty, "Bridging the Gap Between Urban, Suburban, and Educational History," pp. 245-259, in *Rethinking the History of American Education*, ed. William J. Reese and John L. Rury (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

¹¹ Charles H. Clark, "The Charter Oak City," *Scribner's Monthly* 13, no. 1 (September 1876): 1-21.

¹² According to Census 2000, Hartford had the 2nd highest proportion of individual living below the poverty level (30.6 percent) among cities with a population of at least 100,000. Meanwhile, the Hartford Metropolitan Statistical Area median family income was ranked 5th highest in the nation at \$63,932. U.S. Census Bureau, DP-3: Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics, Census 2000 Summary File 3, American FactFinder <<http://factfinder.census.gov>>.

¹³ Population of Connecticut Towns, 1900-1960 and 1970-2000 [compiled from U.S. census data], Department of Economic and Community Development, State of Connecticut, <<http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?a=1106&q=250666>>.

¹⁴ For 1980 to 2000, taxable property values are drawn from official Equalized Net Grand List data published by the Office of Policy and Management, *Fiscal Indicators for Connecticut Municipalities*. For 1950 to 1970, estimated figures were calculated using official Net Grand List data published by the Office of the Tax Commissioner, *Information Relatively to the Assessment and Collection of Taxes*. Earlier net grand lists were equalized (based on each town assessor's stated ratio-to-fair market value), then averaged over a five-year period to correct for reassessments conducted in different years.

¹⁵ On "growth machine" theory and the development of suburban communities, see sociologists John R. Logan, and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁶ Connecticut State Board of Education, *A Survey of the Schools of West Hartford* (Hartford: Author, 1923), p. 103.

¹⁷ Nelson R. Burr, *From Colonial Parish to Modern Suburb: A Brief Appreciation of West Hartford* (Noah Webster Foundation and Historical Society of West Hartford, 1976).

¹⁸ *A Survey of the Schools of West Hartford*, pp. 76, 87, 103, 72.

¹⁹ *A Survey of the Schools of West Hartford*, p. 69, 30.

²⁰ Columbia University. Teachers College. Institute of Educational Research. Division of Field Studies, *The Hartford Public Schools in 1936-37: A Comprehensive Report of the Survey of the Public Schools of Hartford, Connecticut* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1937), pamphlet XI, p. 13.

²¹ *Catalogue of the Hartford Public High School : Doce, Disce, Aut Discede; Tercentenary edition, 1638-1938* ([Hartford, Conn.]: Hartford Press, 1941).

²² *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century: Census 2000 Special Reports, Series Censr-4*. U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002, p. 33

<<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf>>; *One Hundred Twenty Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. U.S. Dept. of Education, 1993, p. 27 <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs93/93442.pdf>>.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, Historical Income Data* [by educational attainment for householders 25 years and over], Tables H-13 and H-14 [adjusted by author], <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/inchhdet.html>>; *The*

Condition of Education 2009. US Department of Education, table A-32-3
<<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2009/section4/table-pch-3.asp>>.

²⁴ "How Good is Your School?" *Life* 16 October 1950, pp. 54-55; Bice Clemow, "A Layman Looks at Schools in West Hartford," reprinted from *West Hartford News*, 25 January to 15 February, 1951.

²⁵ "Three Junior Highs Make Modest Showing" [editorial], 9 November 1950, *West Hartford News*, p. 4.

²⁶ "New School Lines Offered by Thorne," *Hartford Times*, April 8, 1954.

²⁷ This historical analysis of private home and public school advertising draws on methods used in a one-year study by Diana Pearce, "Breaking Down Barriers: New Evidence on the Impact of Metropolitan School Desegregation on Housing Patterns" (Unpublished report, Center for National Policy Review, Law School, Catholic University, Washington, D.C, 1980). We identified all advertisements for homes published in the *Hartford Courant* newspaper on its first Sunday edition in May, on a five-year interval from 1920 to 1990. Ads mentioned either a generic school (e.g., "near school"), a specific school (e.g., "Bugbee School District"), or no school.

²⁸ Alice Holmes Thompson, "Pine Grove School, Seventh District, Avon, Connecticut." *The Lure of Litchfield Hills* 13 (December 1956): 17-21; Clifford Floyd, interview with Jacqueline Katz, City-Suburb Oral History, Cities, Suburbs, and Schools Project, Trinity College, June 9, 2003.

²⁹ Mary-Frances Mackie, "Avon Grows as Living Place for Urban Workers," *Hartford Times*, October 15, 1956; Mary-Frances L. MacKie, *Avon, Connecticut: An Historical Story* (Canaan, NH: Phoenix Publishing for Avon Historical Society, 1988), pp. 254, 258.

³⁰ *Avon Town Report*, Board of Education Report by Superintendent John Deady, 1960, pp. 30-31; *Avon Town Report*, Report of the Avon Board of Education by Superintendent Francis Driscoll, 1965, pp. 39-43. Avon Board of Education. *Education in Avon Moves Ahead*. Undated, circa 1962; and Avon Public Schools. *Avon Education Newsletter*. Winter 1965, v2, n2, both in Board of Education file, Avon Historical Society, Avon Public Library.

³¹ Dee Segel, "Chairwoman, Superintendent Prepare to Leave School System," *Hartford Courant*, June 25, 1992; Rosemary Brady, "Events Challenged 'Quiet' Reputation in Year of Growth," *Hartford Courant*, January 2, 1980; Superintendent Herb Pandiscio Memo to Real Estate Managers, Avon Public Schools, August 1992.

³² "Price of Avon Address Includes Prestige," *Hartford Courant*, September 30 1984; "Avon: Homes Market Activity Begins to Show Gains in Avon, Valley," *Hartford Courant*, February 17, 1991, advertising supplement section J.

³³ Everett Carll Ladd, Jr., *Ideology in America: Change and Response in a City, a Suburb, and a Small Town* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

³⁴ Spencer Shaw, interview with Jacqueline Katz, City-Suburb Oral History Project, Cities, Suburbs, and Schools project, Trinity College, July 2, 2003.

³⁵ James Ross, "Realty Bypassing Told by Resident." *The Hartford Courant*, June 21, 1983, p. 52.

³⁶ "Town Files Complaint Series with HUD on Real Estate Sales," *The Hartford Courant*, November 18, 1973, p. 42; Thomas Williams, "US Sues 7 Area Realty Firms." *The Hartford Courant*, May 3, 1974, p. 1A.

³⁷ Wintonbury Historical Society, *From Wintonbury to Bloomfield* (Bloomfield, CT: Wintonbury Historical Society, 1983), p. 114.

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- ³⁸ On city block-busting and neighborhood schools, see Amanda I. Seligman, *Block By Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chap. 5
- ³⁹ Thomas D. Williams, "Suit Seeks to Stop School District Law," *Hartford Courant*, 21 February 1970; Susan Eaton, *The Children in Room E4: American Education on Trial* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2007).
- ⁴⁰ West Hartford Board of Education, minutes, September 19, 1973, p. 4255.
- ⁴¹ William Hathaway, "How Are the Schools? Now It's Easy to Find Out," *Hartford Courant* 26 Sept 1993, p. J1.
- ⁴² William Hathaway, "How Are the Schools?"
- ⁴³ Robert Frahm, "Will report cards make grade? School self-evaluations have some educators uneasy." *Hartford Courant*, 6 October 1992. pg. A.1
- ⁴⁴ William Hathaway, "How Are the Schools?"
- ⁴⁵ Although a brief news story about West Hartford scores might appear in various editions, a graphic featuring individual school results appeared only in the local edition of the *Hartford Courant*, such as January 6, 1999, page B1 [7 Hartford North final edition].
- ⁴⁶ William Hathaway, "Prudential Replaces Hard Sell with Software to Lure Home Buyers." *The Hartford Courant*, June 6, 1995, p. F1.
- ⁴⁷ According to the Internet Archive <<http://www.archive.org>>, the original website for the Connecticut Department of Education <<http://www.state.ct.us/sde>> was launched in May 1996, and with Strategic School Profiles added as a new feature, most likely in late 1997.
- ⁴⁸ GreatSchools.net, Press release, April 4, 2007, <<http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/static/press20060404.txt/CA>>.
- ⁴⁹ Robin Stansbury, "School Districting Divides West Hartford." *The Hartford Courant*, January 29, 1995, p. A1.
- ⁵⁰ Jack Dougherty, Jeffrey Harrelson, Laura Maloney, Drew Murphy, Russell Smith, Michael Snow, and Diane Zannoni, "School Choice in Suburbia: Test Scores, Race, and Housing Markets," *American Journal of Education* 115, no. 4 (forthcoming August 2009).
- ⁵¹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (2005): 1233-63.
- ⁵² Myron Orfield, *American Metropolitcs: The New Suburban Reality* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), pp. 9-10.
- ⁵³ John L. Rury, *Education and Social Change: Contours in the History of American Schooling, Third Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 220. Compare with Claudia Goldin and Lawrence F. Katz, *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).
- ⁵⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Survey, Historical Income Data* [by educational attainment for householders 25 years and over], Tables H-13 and H-14, <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/histinc/inchhdet.html>>. Data before and after 1991 is not directly comparable due to change in questions. For 1997 and 2007 data points in chart, "Some College" is average of two figures: "Some college, no degree" and "Associates degree" to improve comparability. Also, the 1967 Bachelor's degree figure is interpolated.
- ⁵⁵ David F. Labaree, *The Making of an American High School: The Credentials Market and the Central High School of Philadelphia, 1838-1939* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,

1988), and Labaree, *How to Succeed in School Without Really Learning: The Credentials Race in American Education* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Reed Ueda, *Avenues to Adulthood: The Origins of the High School and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Nancy Beadie, "From Student Markets to Credential Markets: The Creation of the Regents Examination System in New York State, 1864-1890," *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1999): 1-30.

⁵⁶ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).