Catholics Schools, Racial Change, and Suburbanization, 1930-2000

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and
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Hartford, CT
Research Question

How have Catholic schools affected suburbanization in metropolitan Hartford in the 20th century?

School openings and closings
Racial migrations
Social class mobility

Studying one case in detail might give us insight into what is happening around the nation.
Catholic Schools Across the Nation

• Nationwide, over 500 (out of 8,000) Catholic schools have closed across the United States in the past decade
• Most closings in central-city parishes serving immigrants
• During same period, suburban and rural enrollments have nearly made up for the urban loss
Primary Sources

- Office of Catholic Schools
  school enrollment data
- Hartford Courant
  daily newspaper clippings
- Archdiocese of Hartford Chancery
  correspondence, parish school reports,
  Catholic Transcript back issues
History of Archdiocese

- Formed in 1843, territory contained Rhode Island and Connecticut.
- St. Peter’s was the first Archdiocesan school, opened 1859.
- In 1870, their region cut down to serve only the state of Connecticut.
- The Archdiocese did not keep centralized records of school enrollment until after 1930.
Catholic School Openings and Closings in Metropolitan Hartford

- Shifts in Catholic school enrollment - from 1955 to 1965, Hartford declines, while suburbs grew
- Yet from 1965 to 1975, both city and suburbs fell
Changes in Catholic School Enrollment

- Although Catholic school enrollment declined across Hartford County from 1965-75, schools in Hartford lost a larger percentage of students than their suburban counterparts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>Rate of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>5292</td>
<td>2562</td>
<td>-52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>2862</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>-50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>9504</td>
<td>5579</td>
<td>-41%</td>
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## Openings of Catholic Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Openings</th>
<th>1955-65</th>
<th>1965-75</th>
<th>1975-present</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>
## Closings of Catholic Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closings</th>
<th>1955-65</th>
<th>1965-75</th>
<th>1975-present</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hartford</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Britain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the striving for racial balance, race continues to torment the perception of the Archdiocese.

- In 1971, the Catholic Interracial Council’s Bard of Director’s publicly criticized then Archbishop John F. Whealon for not enacting a “central fund” plan.
- In 1972, the Archdiocese demonstrated a 21 per cent enrollment of Black and Latino students, and 24.6 per cent from “disadvantaged backgrounds.”
- By 1980, the then 18-member School Board transacted a policy that would not admit students whose schools were affected by plans to desegregate their public schools.
Archdiocesan School Board

- Formed in 1971, with representatives from both city and suburban parishes, with goal of unification of school interests.
- Plan for centralizing funds for Catholic Schools were shot down by then Archbishop Whealon.
- The failure to enact the plan disproportionately hurt the inner-city parishes that were serving Black and Latino parishioners.
Unanswered Questions

• What factors caused rise and decline in enrollments and number of schools?
  parish decisions? Archdiocesan decisions?
  push-pull factors on family decisions?

• How does Catholic suburbanization compare to general migration trends in metropolitan Hartford?
  public schools versus Catholic schools
  general population versus Catholic population