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### Teacher Suburbanization & The Diverging Discourse on Hartford Public School Quality, 1950-1970

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**Teacher Suburbanization  
&  
The Diverging Discourse on Hartford Public School Quality, 1950 - 1970  
Senior Project**

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October 17, 2002  
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Senior Project  
American Studies

**Introduction:**

Many historians have investigated the great suburban migration in the second half of the twentieth century, others have studied the decline of city schooling, and several have examined the history of education. But rarely do these studies draw connections between the three. Through an examination of the rich historical resource materials for Hartford, Connecticut, this study focuses on two related questions. First, how did the suburbanization rate for teachers in Hartford Public Schools change between 1950 and 1970? Second, to what extent was this demographic shift associated with changes in public discourse about the quality of Hartford Public Schools? By focusing on both issues this study seeks to widen our contextual understanding of some of the broad factors that led to the current failures in the Hartford Public School System.

This study has endeavored to augment three existing groups of literature and bring them closer together. One of these is the history of suburbanization, which examines suburban growth, the transportation revolution, and the romanticization of the suburb, but offers little insight into the changes occurring in education. Other literature offers an oral history of suburbanization by examining the current tone of suburban and urban dwellers

as they describe the city. However, this literature does not discuss how people were talking about the cities while suburbanization was happening.

A second body of literature studies the decline of city schooling, which examines the downfalls of urban education but does not associate those downfalls with teacher suburbanization. A third body of literature examines the history of education; specifically, the relationship between schools and the community. These texts show the importance of a strong school – community relationship; however, they do not study the effect suburbanization has on a city. This study seeks to bring these three bodies of literature together by examining the association of teacher suburbanization and the changing discourse of the public concerning city school quality.

### **The Metropolitan Hartford Case Study:**

This study focuses on the central city of Hartford, Connecticut, and the surrounding twenty eight municipalities which comprise Hartford County, from 1950 to 1970. These two decades mark the peak years of “The Great Suburban Migration” and the beginning of the decline of city schools in the Hartford region. Research also shows that during that same period of time the percentage of Hartford Public School teachers who resided in Hartford decreased significantly. Therefore, this twenty-year span marks not only the height of suburbanization in Hartford County but also a high point of Hartford teacher suburbanization.

This study consists of two stages of research which will allow me to answer both aspects of my research question. Stage one asks a descriptive question: how have Hartford teachers’ residential patterns, relative to their school workplace, changed over time? Hartford Public School Directories from 1949 to 1970, which were obtained from

the Hartford Public Library, provide me with names and addresses of Hartford teachers for each the Hartford schools. This information was used to calculate the percentage of Hartford resident teachers vs. non-Hartford resident teachers. Hartford's racial characteristics in the fifties and sixties provide me with a rich case study, as city residents commonly divided it into the north end, central Hartford, and the south end. The north end consisted of mostly black residents, while the south end and central Hartford consisted mostly of Irish, Italian, and white residents.<sup>1</sup> Using both Hartford tract level census data and Hartford teacher residency data this study was able to examine the racial breakdown of the north end, central Hartford, and south end, and determine whether or not race was associated with the rate of teacher suburbanization. Observable patterns and trends were noted after close examination of all the data.

Stage two of my research studies the diverging strands of public discourse on the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the same period of time. Newspaper clippings from 1950 to 1970, which were obtained from The Connecticut State Library, provide me with a wealth of information concerning school policy, school quality, teacher salaries, the frequency of new schools, and reasons for teacher suburbanization. Each year contained within the newspaper clippings is broken down into categories, which include but are not limited to: schools, school transportation, education, school finance, urban redevelopment, and teachers. Selected folders for each year were reviewed and relevant clippings were scanned and categorized according to themes that are relevant to this study. While some news files concerning suburbanization and suburban school growth were used for background and context purposes, those news articles related to public

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<sup>1</sup> Walsh, Thomas F. "Here Today Where Tomorrow?" *The Hartford Courant*, 1958, in The Hartford Public Library Pamphlet Collection.

discourse concerning Hartford Public School quality were this study's main focus. Furthermore, this study was very interested in finding teachers' voices in the public discourse whenever possible. Other archival sources used include pamphlet materials obtained from the Hartford Public Library, which provide this study with rich public discourse concerning the quality of the Hartford Public Schools between 1950 and 1970.

During the 1950s the public discourse about the Hartford Public Schools represented them as high quality institutions with overall teacher satisfaction with the school and the community. While problems of overcrowding and teacher pay were discussed, these problems were presented as fixable and in some cases national problems not isolated to Hartford. During the 1960s the public discourse shifted from representing the schools as high quality institutions to representing the situation in the schools and the community as highly volatile. Teacher dissatisfaction reached the point of striking, as overcrowding became unconquerable and new school construction was unable to keep up. Furthermore, during the 1960s there was a drastic split among the voice of labor and the voice of management, as the teacher's union and the board of education disputed teacher pay and teaching conditions. All of these changes in discourse occurred when Hartford teachers were moving out of the city at a rate of nearly 20 percent per decade. Although this study does not claim that a changing public discourse caused suburbanization, or vice versa, it does underscore the fact that these two shifts occurred simultaneously.

This study associates teacher suburbanization and a diverging discourse with the decline of Hartford Public School quality. Because school quality is a multifaceted term with many factors which influence it that were not investigated in this study, such as

school finance and standardized testing, no definitive claims can be made which assert that these two factors are directly related to declining school quality. However, this study offers a glimpse into how such a major shift occurred over such a short period of time. An understanding of how Hartford Public Schools went from some of the most “desirable places to work” to the failing schools they represent today is crucial if any change is to occur.

### **A Brief History of Suburbanization & Its Importance:**

This study’s merging of three bodies of literature begins with the examination of the history of suburbanization. Suburbanization is the movement of individuals from the city to the suburbs. For the purposes of this study, teacher suburbanization will refer to city teachers who have moved to the suburbs but still teach in city schools. While the ramifications of any worker living in the suburbs and working in the city are significant, the result of a teacher living in the suburbs and teaching in the city may be even more detrimental, as it can negatively affect school quality. The way a teacher views the community and school they work in may affect the way they teach. If a high percentage of teachers do not have close contact with the school or community they teach in, the quality of that school may decline. Therefore, the importance of teacher suburbanization is clear as it may be associated with declining school quality.

The creation of the suburb as a desirable place to live was a long process which began with the transportation revolution of the 1800s. With the introduction of the steam ferry, the horse car, the cable car, and other means of transportation, the ability of city dwellers to work in the city and live in the suburbs began to take shape. However, the

desire to live and work in the city was still prevalent in the 1800s, as the city was the home of industry and business. Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier* reminds us that despite the transportation revolution "the wealthy sought dwellings in the heart of the city not on the edges...to live outside the walls, away from palaces and cathedrals, was to live in inferior surroundings."<sup>2</sup>

The continued improvements of public transportation, including the invention of the trolley, began to encourage suburbanization as it made housing available to the common man and helped reduce congestion in the city. Following World War II "cheap land, inexpensive construction methods, favorable peripheral taxing policies, and the rapid expansion of public utilities" helped increase the popularity of the suburbs.<sup>3</sup> Because of these factors the white middle class was able to buy into safe neighborhoods with the security of owning their own detached home. As the suburbs grew the need for local governments, schools, and business also grew. Some say that with the expansion of the car and the highway, the suburbs began to deprive the cities of their most valuable resources. The cities, which once housed the upper-class, began to crumble, as the frequency of ghettos and slums increased with the onset of white flight.

In response to the poverty of the city and the overcrowding of its slums the government began to build public housing within the city walls during the 1930s. The result of public housing in the United States "was to segregate the races, to concentrate the disadvantaged in inner cities, and to reinforce the image of suburbia as a place of refuge for the problems of race, crime, and poverty."<sup>4</sup> Following the end of World War

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<sup>2</sup> Jackson, Kenneth T, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985), 15-17.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson 132.

<sup>4</sup> Jackson 219.



If the situation got worse, as thousands of men came back from the war, married, and began to raise families. The result was an incredible influx in population and a need for housing. In the best-known response to this crisis, Abraham Levitt and his sons purchased some 4000 acres in the town of Hempstead, Long Island, where they built some seventeen thousand homes which housed more than eighty thousand residents.

The result was a suburban town, soon named Levittown, with affordable housing, located only 25 miles away from Manhattan. Levittown continued to grow as its cookie-cutter houses were surrounded by sixty playgrounds, nine swimming pools, ten baseball fields, and seven village greens.<sup>5</sup> However, Abraham Levitt did not only add houses to America's suburbs, he also added another level of segregation. For two decades following the war Levitt refused to sell any houses to blacks, asserting that "we can solve a housing problem, or we can try to solve a racial problem. But we cannot combine the two."<sup>6</sup>

With this the suburbs became very selective havens for those who fit the suburban criteria. These criteria "did not include minorities or the elderly... [and were] accompanied by the isolation of nuclear families, by the decline of public transportation, and by the deterioration of the urban neighborhood."<sup>7</sup> With the isolation of families came a "weakened sense of community which prevails in most metropolitan areas," as the social life of suburbanites became privatized there was a "reduced feeling of concern and responsibility among families for their neighbors and among the suburbanites in general for residents of the inner city."<sup>8</sup> This apathy towards the city and the community

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson 236.

<sup>6</sup> Jackson 341.

<sup>7</sup> Jackson 245.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson 272.

came as a result of suburban life being centered around the home, rather than the neighborhood or the community. Thus, the open look of suburbia is deceiving, since each house can become its own closed-gate community.

The power and importance of these closed gate communities is often overlooked, as it can appear to be just a series of suburban neighborhoods surrounding the central urban city. However, suburbanization was not simply a shift in where people live; it was also a shift in where people exert their political power. In *The United States of Suburbia*, G. Scott Thomas contends that “what is new is suburbia’s dominant position in American politics. Suburban voters, who once followed the lead of their big-city counter-parts, now hold the reins of national power.”<sup>9</sup> Thomas claims that this shift from city power to suburban dominance was noticeable for the first time in the 1948 election, noting that after three years of white flight, the suburbs were “beginning to develop a distinct political personality, as reflected by election results.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, suburbia became not only the source of ideal living, but also the center of political power.

Suburbanization began as the result of new forms of transportation and served as a method of ending the overcrowding and congestion of city life. However, with the creation of Levittown suburbia soon became the location of the middle class as it began to represent “a place where ordinary people, not just the elite, would have access to affordable, attractive modern housing in communities with parks, gardens, recreation, stores, and cooperative town meeting places.”<sup>11</sup> With suburbanization came the decline of the city and the beginning of city-suburban segregation, as minorities became more

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas, Scott G, *The United States of Suburbia* (New York, 1998), 10.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas 46.

<sup>11</sup> Baxandall, R. & Ewen, E, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York, 2000), xxi.

concentrated in impoverished city blocks and whites left to move into their cookie-cutter houses isolated from city problems. The increasing political power of the suburbs marked a turning point for suburbia, as it moved beyond a place to live and grew into a place to assert power.

Understanding the power of suburbia, and the draw of the “Leave it to Beaver” lifestyle that it promised to those who could afford it, will help us understand its effect on city schooling and teacher suburbanization. As suburban schools became the best schools in the nation, and as suburbia became the best place to bring up children, the focus of the nation shifted to the suburb. As a result, city schools and city children were often overlooked. This ability of suburbanites to look away from the problems of the city and enjoy the advantages of the suburbs helps explain how the city became a place of poverty and problems. This study illuminates the effects of teacher suburbanization and a changing public discourse which represents the city and its schools in a hopeless state of decline.

## Teacher Suburbanization in the Hartford Public School System:

As noted in the introduction, the height of suburbanization in Hartford County occurred between 1950 and 1970. Between 1950 and 1970, Hartford's share of the county's population decreased by 14 percentage points, compared to a decrease of only 8 percentage points between 1900 and 1950, and a decrease of only 5 percentage points between 1970 and 2000 (see Table 1). However, many of those residents who moved out of Hartford and into the surrounding twenty-eight municipalities still commuted to the central city in order to work. Unfortunately, the limitation of census data in the fifties and sixties prevents us from knowing what percentage of those who moved to the suburbs still worked in the central city. Since the ability to live outside of the city walls and still commute to work was one of the major influences of suburbanization, this missing piece of information makes studying suburbanization very difficult. Fortunately, because of the availability of Hartford Public School Directories between 1950 and 1970, this study is able to examine the rate of suburbanization of Hartford Public School teachers.

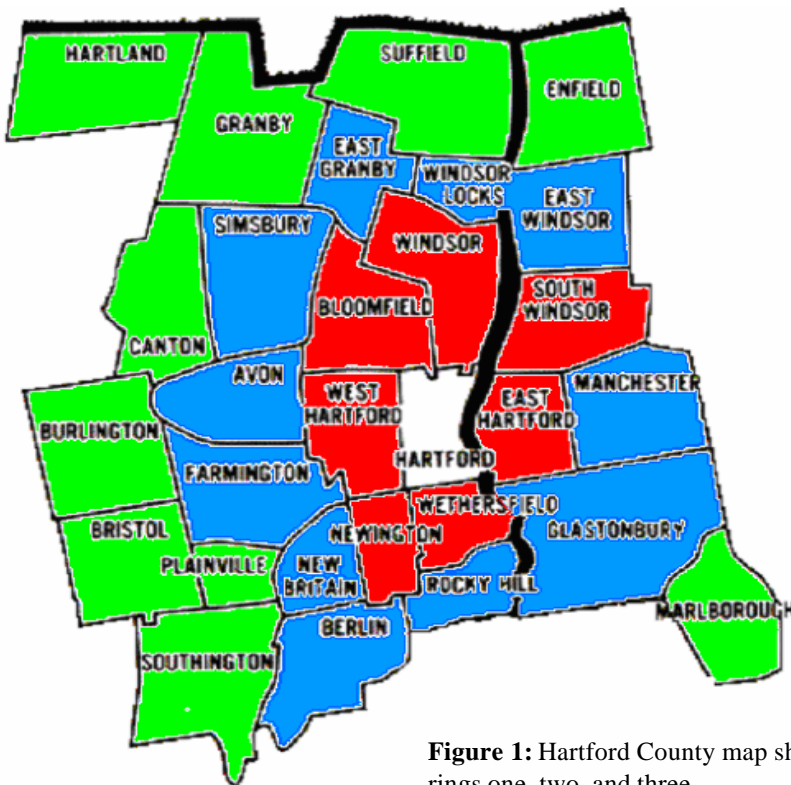
	Population 1900	Population 1950	Population 1960	Population 1970	Population 2000
<b>Hartford Population</b>	79,850	177,397	162,178	158,017	121,578
<b>Hartford County Population</b>	195,480	539,661	689,931	816,737	857,183
<b>Hartford's Percentage Share of Hartford County Population</b>	41%	33%	24%	19%	14%
<b>Percentage Point Change 1950 to 1970</b>			-14%		

**Table 1: Change of Hartford's Percentage Share of Hartford County Population From 1950 – 1970.** Percentage point change represents percentage point difference for Hartford's percentage share of Hartford County's population from 1950 to 1970.

Hartford Public School Directories from 1950 to 1970, which were obtained from the Hartford Public Library, provided the names and addresses of Hartford teachers for each of the Hartford schools. After determining which schools existed in both 1950 and 1970, a total of nineteen schools, the directories for these schools were examined for

approximately every fifth year: 1949-1950, 1955-1956, 1959-1960, 1965-1966, and 1969-1970. Those schools included: Alfred E. Burr Junior High School, Arsenal School, Brackett School, Brown School, Bulkeley High School, Clarence A. Barbour School, Dominick F. Burns School, Dr. James H. Naylor School, Hartford Public High School, Henry C. Dwight School, Moylan-Wilson School, New Park Avenue, Noah Webster School, Northwest School, Richard J. Kinsella School, Sarah J. Rawson School, Vine Street School, Weaver High School, and West Middle School. Data concerning how many teachers resided in Hartford and how many teachers resided outside of Hartford was noted for each of the nineteen schools that existed over the twenty year span.

Detailed information concerning which towns teachers lived in within Hartford County was also noted. In order to categorize this data these towns were broken down into ring one towns (in red), which are directly touching Hartford; ring two towns (in blue), which are directly touching towns in ring one; and ring three towns (in green), which are directly touching towns in ring two. Since this study only concerns Hartford



County towns, those teachers who reside outside of Hartford County will be grouped under the artificial designation of outlying areas. Using these ring designations, one is

**Figure 1:** Hartford County map showing the geographic location of rings one, two, and three.

able to explore how far away Hartford teachers were moving from the central city.

The number of Hartford resident teachers compared to the number of non-Hartford resident teachers was calculated for the nineteen Hartford schools. The number of non-Hartford resident teachers living in rings one, two, three, and in all outlying areas was also calculated for the nineteen Hartford schools. The percentages of Hartford resident teachers vs. non-Hartford resident teachers were then determined as well as the percentages of non-Hartford resident teachers living in rings one through three and all other outlying areas. This data was used to answer the following two questions: First, how did the percentage of Hartford resident teachers vs. non-Hartford resident teachers change between 1950 and 1970 in all of the nineteen Hartford schools? Second, how have Hartford teachers' residential patterns, in relation to ring one, ring two, ring three, and outlying areas, changed between 1950 and 1970 in all of the nineteen Hartford schools? Answering these questions will aid us in understanding Hartford teacher suburbanization between 1950 and 1970.

*Changing Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers vs. Non-Hartford Resident Teachers:*

During the 1949 – 1950 school year a total of 645 teachers were working in the nineteen Hartford schools being examined. The percentage of Hartford resident teachers to total teachers for all of the nineteen Hartford schools averaged of 70 percent. Individual school percentages ranged from 50 percent to 89 percent (see Table 2). During the 1969 – 1970 school year a total of 1320 teachers were working in the nineteen Hartford schools being examined. The percentage of Hartford resident teachers to total teachers for all of the nineteen Hartford schools averaged of 33 percent. Individual school percentages ranged from 15 percent to 46 percent. In comparing the average of

Hartford resident teachers from 1950 – 1970, there was a decrease of 37 percentage points. Although the total number of teachers working within the nineteen Hartford Schools between 1950 and 1970 more than doubled, overall the number of Hartford resident teachers remained almost the same, but the proportion sharply decreased.

	1949-1950	1955-1956	1959-1960	1965-1966	1969-1970	Percentage Point Change
<b>Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	474	443	386	404	456	
<b>Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	200	284	392	626	922	
<b>Total Teachers</b>	674	727	778	1030	1378	
<b>Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	70%	61%	50%	39%	33%	-37%
<b>Range</b>	50% -89%	80% -44%	71% -24%	58% -31%	15% -46%	

**Table 2: Comparison of Hartford Resident to Non-Hartford Resident Teachers for 19 Hartford Schools from 1950 – 1970.** Range represents the span of the percentage of Hartford resident teachers for each of the 19 Hartford Schools within the specified year. Percentage point change represents percentage point difference for the percentage of total Hartford resident teachers in all of the 19 schools for 1950 and 1970.

*Hartford teachers' residential patterns, in relation to ring one, ring two, ring three, and outlying areas:*

The percentage of non-Hartford resident teachers living in rings one through three and all other outlying areas was examined between 1950 and 1970. For each of the nineteen Hartford Schools the total non-Hartford resident teachers were broken down into rings one through three and all other outlying areas. These values were totaled and compared to the total non-Hartford resident teachers producing the percentages listed in table three. The difference of the percentages of 1950 and 1970 were calculated, producing the percent change listed. The range for non-Hartford resident teachers in the rings for each of the nineteen schools is also given in table three. For ring one there is a decrease of 16 percentage points of non-Hartford resident teachers. For rings two, three, and all other outlying areas there were increases of 14, 1, and 2 percentage points,

respectively. Although there is a decrease of non-Hartford resident teachers in ring one, the total number of teachers continued to increase between 1950 and 1970. Increases were seen as well in rings two, three, and all other outlying areas, including total non-Hartford resident teachers. Thus, increases were seen in rings located farther away from Hartford in the selected twenty year span.

		1949-1950	1955-1956	1959-1960	1965-1966	1969-1970	Percentage Point Change
	<b>Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	201	279	393	620	908	
<b>Ring 1</b>	<b>Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	139	197	294	398	480	
	<b>Percentage of Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	69%	71%	75%	64%	53%	-16%
	<b>Range</b>	33% -100%	45% -100%	56% -89%	50% -79%	41% -75%	
<b>Ring 2</b>	<b>Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	24	27	43	117	233	
	<b>Percentage of Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	12%	10%	11%	19%	26%	14%
	<b>Range</b>	0% -67%	0% -27%	0% -23%	6% -30%	11% -41%	
<b>Ring 3</b>	<b>Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	3	7	4	17	19	
	<b>Percentage of Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%
	<b>Range</b>	0% -8%	0% -13%	0% -5%	0% -10%	0% -8%	
<b>Outlying Areas</b>	<b>Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	35	48	52	88	176	
	<b>Percentage of Total Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	17%	17%	13%	14%	19%	2%
	<b>Range</b>	0% -50%	0% -40%	0% -32%	0% -28%	6% -37%	

**Table 3: Comparison of non-Hartford resident teachers living in rings 1-3 and outlying areas for 19 Hartford Schools between 1950 and 1970.** Range represents the span of the percentage of non-Hartford resident teachers living in the specified ring for each of the 19 Hartford Schools within the specified year. Percentage point change represents percentage point difference for the percentage of total non-Hartford resident teachers in the specified ring for 1950 to 1970.

### **The Association of Racial Characteristics with Teacher Suburbanization:**

During the 1950s there was a high frequency of population shifts in and out of Hartford. A 1958 series published by *The Hartford Courant* defined and interpreted these population shifts. Thomas F. Walsh's "Here Today, Where Tomorrow?" divided



the city into five distinct sections and detailed their geographic, population, and racial characteristics. They were: the northeast, northwest, central, southeast, and southwest areas. For the purposes of this study the northeast and northwest sections were combined to form the north end, and the southeast and southwest sections were combined to form the south end. The reasoning behind this is two fold: first, the characteristics given by Walsh for those sections combined were very similar; second, much of the public discourse found in newspapers concerning Hartford in the fifties and sixties refers to Hartford's north end and Hartford's south end. Central Hartford was also included in this study because its unique location in the business district represents a characteristically distinct section of Hartford. For those reasons the city has been divided into three sections, the north end, central Hartford, and the south end.

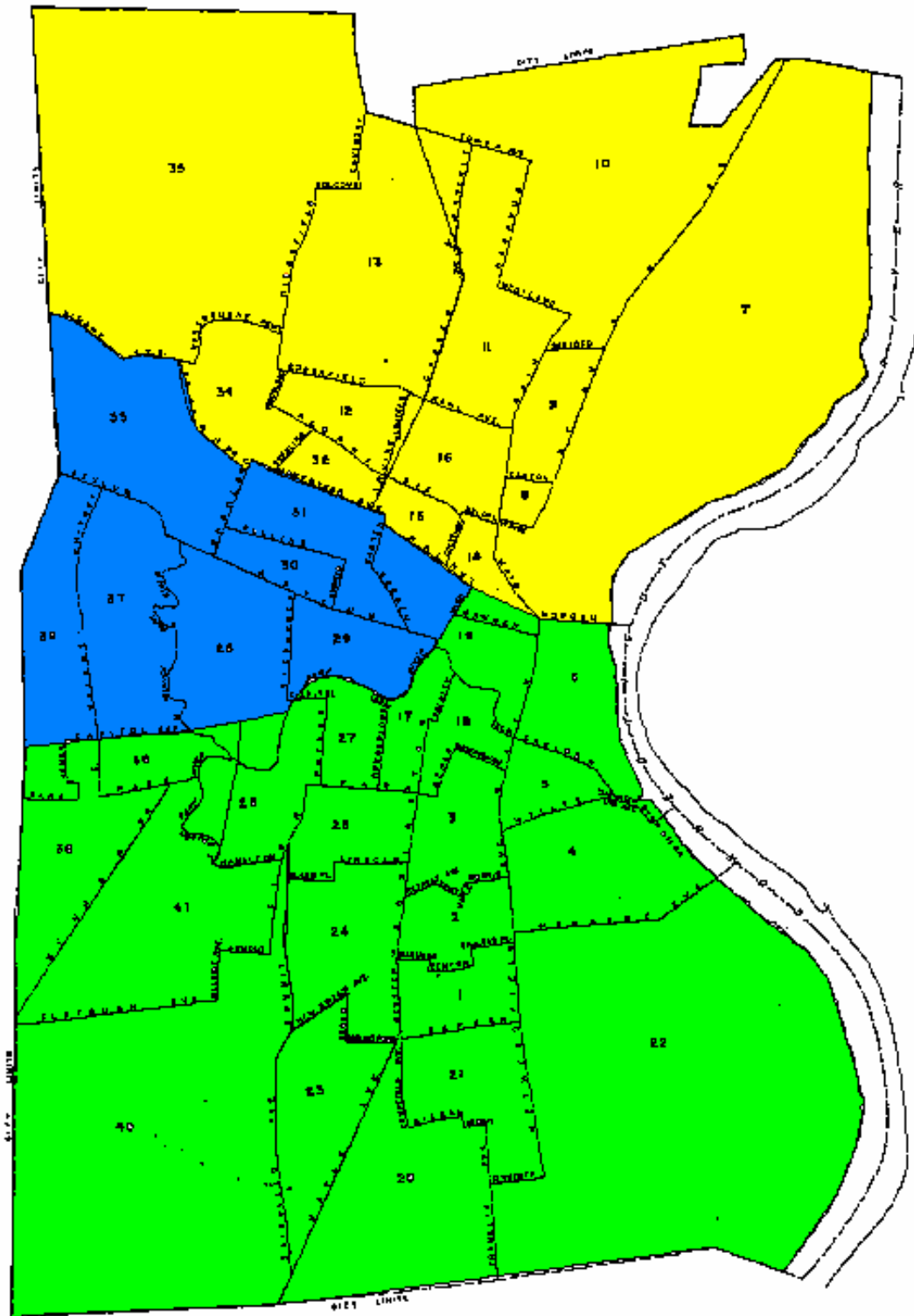
In order to understand why Hartford was artificially divided into these three sections, it is important to examine the population and racial characteristics of each of them. Thomas F. Walsh described the story of the north end as double-barreled. "Negro expansion and White removals. These two forces together, plus the slum conditions, in part of the area have turned the [north end] into an area of comparative undesirability to city residents."<sup>12</sup> Walsh described similar slum conditions in central Hartford, as the physical aspect of this section was deteriorating at a rapid pace. Central Hartford seems to attract more individuals rather than families due to its location in the center of the business district, which is growing. Conversely, in the south end there was an increase of new homes, new schools, and families. Overall the south end was an area of growth as people of French, Polish, and Eastern European nationality moved in to replace the

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<sup>12</sup> Walsh, Thomas F. "Here Today Where Tomorrow?" *The Hartford Courant*, 1958, in The Hartford Public Library Pamphlet Collection.

Italians that were moving out. Clearly, there were three distinct sections with distinct characteristics. The question we are left with is whether or not the conditions and racial characteristics of the north end, central Hartford, and the south end, affected the rate of teacher suburbanization in the schools that were located in each of these sections.

In order to accurately construct the racial characteristics and patterns of these three sections it was necessary to work with census tract level data. The city of Hartford is broken down into forty-one census tracts. Information concerning the population and racial characteristics for each of the tracts is available from the Census Bureau. Using the geographic boundaries suggested by Walsh and a 1950 Hartford census tract map, the census tracts that made up the north end, in yellow, central Hartford, in blue, and the south end, in green, were marked off and color coded (see Figure 2). The number of total Hartford residents residing in each of the three sections was calculated. The number of total non-white and white Hartford residents residing in each of the three sections was also calculated. The percentages of white Hartford residents vs. non-white Hartford residents were then determined for those residents living in the north end, central Hartford, and the south end.



**Figure 2:** 1950 Hartford tract level census map showing the geographic location of the north end, central Hartford, & the south end.

In 1950 there were 57,513 people living in the north end of Hartford, and 80 percent of those residents were white. In 1970 there were 57,874 people living in the north end of Hartford, but only 31 percent of those residents were white. Interestingly, the total population of the north end did not fluctuate over the twenty year span. The population of white Hartford residents living in the north end fell 49 percentage points between 1950 and 1970 (see Table 4).

In 1950 there were 26,192 people living in central Hartford, and almost 100 percent of those residents were white. In 1970 there were 20,901 people living in central Hartford, and 92 percent of those residents were white. Interestingly, the total population of central Hartford decreases over the twenty year period despite continued growth in the business district. The population of white Hartford residents living in central Hartford fell 8 percentage points between 1950 and 1970.

In 1950 there were 92,659 people living in the south end of Hartford, 99 percent of those residents were white. In 1970 there were 74,510 people living in the south end of Hartford, 94 percent of those residents were white. Interestingly, the north end was the only section of Hartford to see an increase in its population. The population of white Hartford residents living in the south end fell 5 percentage points between 1950 and 1970.

		1950	1960	1970	Percentage Point Change
<b>North End</b>	<b>White Population</b>	45937	35412	18095	
	<b>Non-White Population</b>	11576	22187	38702	
	<b>Total Population</b>	57513	57599	57874	
	<b>Percentage White Population</b>	80%	61%	31%	-49%
	<b>Percentage Non-White Population</b>	20%	39%	67%	47%
<b>Central Hartford</b>	<b>White Population</b>	26192	21462	19257	
	<b>Non-White Population</b>	105	158	1281	
	<b>Total Population</b>	26297	21620	20901	
	<b>Percentage White Population</b>	100%	99%	92%	-8%
	<b>Percentage Non-White Population</b>	0%	1%	6%	6%
<b>South End</b>	<b>White Population</b>	92569	80153	74510	
	<b>Non-White Population</b>	1109	2806	4108	
	<b>Total Population</b>	93587	82959	79242	
	<b>Percentage White Population</b>	99%	97%	94%	-5%
	<b>Percentage Non-White Population</b>	1%	3%	5%	4%
<b>All of Hartford</b>	<b>White Population</b>	164698	137027	111862	
	<b>Non-White Population</b>	12790	25151	44091	
	<b>Total Population</b>	177397	162178	158017	
	<b>Percentage White Population</b>	93%	84%	71%	-22%
	<b>Percentage Non-White Population</b>	7%	16%	28%	21%

**Table 4: Comparison of non-white Hartford residents vs. white Hartford residents in the north end, central Hartford, and the south end sections between 1950 and 1970.** Percentage point change represents the percentage point difference for the percentage of total non-white Hartford residents and white Hartford residents in the specified section of Hartford for 1950 to 1970.

In trying to determine if there was an association between teacher suburbanization and the racial characteristics of the north end, central Hartford, and the south end, the teacher residency patterns for each of these sections were examined. The addresses of the nineteen Hartford schools, with continuous existence in the 20-year study, were used to determine their location within the north end, central Hartford, or south end section of the census map. All schools which were located in the north end were grouped under the category of north end schools; this process was repeated for central Hartford schools and south end schools (see Table 5). The total number of Hartford resident teachers, non-Hartford resident teachers, and total Hartford teachers were calculated for each of the sections for 1950 and 1970. The percentage of Hartford resident teachers was also calculated for each of the sections for 1950 and 1970.

North End Schools	Central Hartford Schools	South End Schools
<b>Dr. James H. Naylor School</b> 639 Franklin Ave. <b>Northwest School</b> 485 Woodland St. <b>Sarah J. Rawson School</b> 260 Holcomb St. <b>Vine Street School</b> 104 Vine St. <b>Weaver High School</b> 25 Ridgefield St. <b>Arsenal School</b> 1800 Main St. <b>Clarence A. Barbour School</b> 150 Tower Ave.	<b>Brackett School</b> 54 Wetland St. <b>Noah Webster School</b> 5 Cone St. <b>West Middle School</b> 927 Asylum Ave. <b>Hartford Public High School</b> 170 Broad St	<b>Brown School</b> 180 Market St. <b>Dominick F. Burns School</b> 195 Putnam St. <b>Henry C. Dwight School</b> 585 Wethersfield Ave. <b>Richard J. Kinsella School</b> 42 Charter Oak Ave. <b>Alfred E. Burr Junior High School</b> 400 Wethersfield Ave. <b>Bulkeley High School</b> 470 Maple Ave. <b>Moylan-Wilson School</b> 235 Hillside Ave. <b>New Park Avenue</b> 43 New Park Ave.

**Table 5:** Listing of 19 Hartford Public Schools, with continuous existence between 1950 and 1970, categorized by geographic location relative to north end, central Hartford, and south end boundaries.

During the 1949 – 1950 school year a total of 185 teachers were working in the north end schools. The number of Hartford resident teachers in the north end to total teachers in the north end had an average of 76 percent of teachers teaching in the north end living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 63 percent to 89 percent (see Table 6). During the 1969 - 1970 school year a total of 185 teachers were working in the north end schools. Interestingly, the number of teachers teaching in the north end was the same in 1950 as it was in 1970. The number of Hartford resident teachers in the north end to total teachers in the north end had an average of 38 percent of teachers teaching in the north end living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 23 percent to 46 percent. Within north end schools between 1950 and 1970, there was a 38 percentage point decrease in Hartford resident teachers in relation to the total teacher, Hartford resident and non-Hartford resident, population.

		1949 - 1950	1969 - 1970	Percentage Point Change
<b>North End Schools</b>	<b>Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	185	185	
	<b>Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	58	303	
	<b>Total Teachers</b>	243	488	
	<b>Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	76%	38%	-38%
	<b>Range</b>	63% - 89%	23% - 46%	
<b>Central Hartford Schools</b>	<b>Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	103	136	
	<b>Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	60	278	
	<b>Total Teachers</b>	163	414	
	<b>Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	63%	33%	-30%
	<b>Range</b>	52% - 74%	20% - 38%	
<b>South End Schools</b>	<b>Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	186	135	
	<b>Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	82	341	
	<b>Total Teachers</b>	268	476	
	<b>Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	69%	28%	-41%
	<b>Range</b>	50% - 83%	15% - 36%	
<b>All 19 Hartford Schools</b>	<b>Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	474	456	
	<b>Non-Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	200	922	
	<b>Total Teachers</b>	674	1378	
	<b>Percentage of Hartford Resident Teachers</b>	70%	33%	-37%
	<b>Range</b>	50% - 80%	15% - 46%	

**Table 6: Comparison of Hartford resident vs. non-Hartford resident teachers living in the north end, central Hartford, and the south end sections between 1950 and 1970.** Range represents the span of the percentage of Hartford resident teachers living in the specified section for each of the schools in the specified year. Percentage point change represents the percentage point difference for the percentage of Hartford resident teachers in the specified section for 1950 to 1970.

During the 1949 – 1950 school year a total of 103 teachers were working in the central Hartford schools. The number of Hartford resident teachers in central Hartford to total teachers in central Hartford had an average of 63 percent of teachers teaching in the central Hartford living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 52 percent to 74 percent. During the 1969 - 1970 school year a total of 136 teachers were working in central Hartford schools. The number of Hartford resident teachers in central Hartford to total teachers in central Hartford had an average of 33 percent of teachers teaching in the

central Hartford living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 20 percent to 36 percent. Within central Hartford schools between 1950 and 1970, there was a 30 percentage point decrease in Hartford resident teachers in relation to the total teacher, Hartford resident and non-Hartford resident, population.

During the 1949 – 1950 school year a total of 186 teachers were working in the south end schools. The number of Hartford resident teachers in the south end to total teachers in the south end had an average of 69 percent of teachers teaching in the south end living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 50 percent to 83 percent. During the 1969 - 1970 school year a total of 135 teachers were working in the south end schools. The number of Hartford resident teachers in the south end to total teachers in the south end had an average of 28 percent of teachers teaching in the south end living within Hartford. These percentages ranged from 15 percent to 36 percent. Within south end schools between 1950 and 1970, there was a 41 percentage point decrease in Hartford resident teachers in relation to the total teacher, Hartford resident and non-Hartford resident, population.

After close examination of both the census data and the Hartford teacher resident data there was a general trend of Hartford teachers moving into non-Hartford residences. However, there was no observable pattern among teacher residency in the three sections of Hartford in relation to the racial characteristics of those sections. The percentage point change in the north end and the south end were almost the same, and the percentage point change in central Hartford was very close to that of the north and south end. Interestingly, the south end, which was predominantly white and was described as the most favorable place to live by Walsh, saw the greatest percentage point change of



Hartford resident teachers moving into non-Hartford residences. Therefore, the social and racial characteristics of the given sections cannot be strongly associated with the rate of teacher suburbanization in those sections.

The rate of Hartford teacher suburbanization and the distance teachers were moving away from the central city of Hartford are clear indications that something was changing in the city during the twenty year span. This study's inability to associate race as a major cause of teacher suburbanization shows that suburbanization is caused by a number of factors which go far beyond the percentage of non-whites living in a particular region of Hartford. In order to understand the high rate of teacher suburbanization in Hartford it is necessary to examine the changing and diverging public discourse concerning Hartford Public School quality. Understanding the ways in which teachers and the public talk about schools and the community can help uncover some of the influences of suburbanization.

The importance of public discourse becomes clear in Ray Suarez's *The Old Neighborhood*. Suarez helps chronicle the changing tone of suburbanites as they look at the city with fearful eyes during the 1990s.<sup>13</sup> The next section of this study seeks to expand upon Suarez's study by examining the changing public discourse of Hartford Public School quality between 1950 and 1970. Revealing how people talked about city school problems and city community issues may help refocus our efforts and our views concerning the revitalization of Hartford and other cities across the nation.

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<sup>13</sup> Suarez, Ray, *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration: 1966-1999* (New York, 1999), 97.

## **A Diverging Discourse:**

Changes in the way people talk about the quality of a school system often allude to changes in the quality of that school system. The diverging discourse concerning the quality of the Hartford Public Schools between 1950 and 1970 helps chronicle major changes occurring throughout that time period. This study will illuminate those changes by examining the public discourse in the 1950s and the 1960s. Because of the variety of discussion going on about Hartford Public School quality during this time, it was necessary to ask two specific questions in order to understand the changes that are occurring. First, what was the public discourse like concerning problems in the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1950s and 1960s? Second, what was the public discourse like concerning improving the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1950s and 1960s? The distinction between these two questions lies in the difference between talking about a school's problems that have to be fixed and talking about how to improve and enrich a school, not because it has to be done, but because it can be done. These two questions were asked during the examination of the newspaper clippings obtained from the Connecticut State Library. The findings are quite striking as the discourse seems to chronicle the decline of Hartford Public School quality between 1950 and 1970.

### *Problems in the Hartford Public Schools in the 1950s:*

As noted in the introduction during the 1950s the public debate concerning the Hartford Public Schools represented the schools as high quality institutions with overall teacher satisfaction with the school and the community. While problems were discussed, these problems were presented as fixable and in some cases national issues not isolated to

Hartford. In order to present these problems in an effective way, this study breaks them down into the following categories: basic problems, dropout problems, population problems, teacher issues, school finance, and suburban involvement. Each of these categories was examined and overall themes and patterns have been noted.

In 1954 Connecticut schools were said to be facing the same problems and issues as the rest of the nation. An editor from the *Hartford Courant* noted that “like all other states... Connecticut remains beset by the shortage of school facilities. Small communities, swollen by recent migrations from the cities, must find a place to teach the new children in their midst-and teachers to do the job.”<sup>14</sup> Teacher shortages and the need for new school facilities were all noted as problems facing Connecticut schools. Interestingly, these problems were focused to the suburbs. As the recent migrations, or suburbanization, is the focus of this quote. Notice that it was not the cities which needed teachers and new schools, but instead the suburbs, as many small suburban towns were building up their school communities for the first time.

An understanding of this helps us as we examine the questions addressed by 75 representatives of a variety of civic groups, including education, clergy, labor, and manufacturers, that came together in 1955 to address problems in education. “What educational program will meet today’s needs? What school building program is needed? How can an adequate supply of teachers be provided? How can the cost of education be met?”<sup>15</sup> Assuming that the needs of education in Connecticut have not drastically shifted in the eight months between these two articles, then these questions were most likely focused on the suburbs. Therefore, in the early fifties educational needs and problems

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<sup>14</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Educations Future,” 6 September 1954.

<sup>15</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “75 Discuss Problems in Education,” 20 April 1955.

were not being focused on city schools, but instead on suburban schools as well, as rapid suburbanization caused issues of overcrowding.

The public debate on discipline problems facing the Hartford Public School System revolved around issues at home. Both teachers and administrators agreed that there was a need for better home conditions in order for the discipline problems to end. Superintendent of schools Robert H. Black spoke of parental responsibility being shifted to the schools. “The schools in the last decade or two have accepted the responsibilities that used to be the problems of the home...These added responsibilities...have created a need in the schools for more direct and personal guidance which parents did themselves formally.”<sup>16</sup> One of the causes of this shifted responsibility was said by teachers to be the fact that mothers were now working, and that this caused poor conditions at home. They suggested specialized classrooms for problem children in order to rid the schools of any major disruptions.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that teachers were focusing the problem of discipline on working mothers helps illustrate this as a national rather than local problem. During the 1950s women were working outside of the home at a higher frequency, this was a residual effect of women needing to work during WWII. Juvenile delinquency was also a major issue in the 1950s which was not focused on one state or city. This idea was backed up by a 1957 article in which Connecticut principals agreed that the problem of “delinquency is not just a local problem or a school problem but is national and essentially a social and parental problem.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the public discourse concerning discipline issues in the

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<sup>16</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Schools Have to Take on Jobs Parents Used to Do, Hearing Told,” 18 January 1956

<sup>17</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Special School Backed For Problem Pupils,” 14 June 1957.

<sup>18</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Discipline OK, Principals Assert,” 26 April 1957.

1950s does not focus on Hartford and does not represent declining school quality. Instead, it represents a national shift away from the “Leave it to Beaver” lifestyle that the nation had grown so accustomed to.

The massive increases in student population following the baby boom represent one the most pressing school issues of the 1950s. In 1951 an article which ran in *The Hartford Times* noted that these increases have produced “acute school problems in many communities.”<sup>19</sup> These problems included overcrowding and the need for new school facilities. By 1953 many towns were forced to use double sessions in order to accommodate the large increases in population; however, at no time during the 1950s did Hartford implement double sessions.

Furthermore, the public discourse concerning the need for new schools focused on Connecticut rather than Hartford. According to a 1954 survey by the State Education Department, “Connecticut will need an estimated \$243 million worth of new schools by 1960...115 elementary schools and 39 high schools are either under construction or in the definite planning stages. Between 1955, when the schools will be practically completed, and 1960, 32 more elementary schools and new high schools will be needed.”<sup>20</sup> There are two important facts to observe as we examine the language of this excerpt. First, despite the increasing need for schools it seems that there was also an increase in the construction of new schools; therefore, Connecticut was addressing the population problem. Second, at no point in this article was Hartford mentioned as an area in desperate need of new facilities. Once again, we find that the educational problems of the 1950s were state and national issues, not Hartford issues.

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<sup>19</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Tackling the School Problem,” 29 August 1951.

<sup>20</sup> *The New York Herald Tribune*, “Connecticut Study Calls for 208 New Schools by 1960,” 21 February 1954.

Hartford teacher complaints and concerns revolved around the need for more free time and higher pay. In a 1956 article which focused on the motivation behind teachers leaving the profession the following reasons were given: low salaries, dictatorial administration, clerical chores, a lack of housing, the death of social opportunities, and little opportunity for advancement. In that same article Connecticut teachers interviewed during a CEA study demanded no lunch duties and “no extra curricular duties except voluntary. The teacher I feel, is the best judge as to how much time or energy she can give. We are, in my opinion, killing the initiative, resourcefulness and other qualities which helped to make this nation great by too much supervision.”<sup>21</sup> In examining the language of this complaint it is interesting to note that teachers were concerned not only with their own quality of life, but also with declining school quality, as they viewed their poor working conditions as a cause of declining school quality.

During the 1950s the need for teachers to be better paid was an issue that the general public debated more in the newspapers than the teachers. The reasons behind this lie in the fact that teachers were not unionized and did not have a single public voice during the 1950s. Because of this, the public often served as the voice of the teachers. Although there was a radio campaign in 1956 which asked for increases in teacher pay, overall, during 1950s teachers seemed to remain relatively quiet when it came to salary agreements.<sup>22</sup> In a 1956 editorial written by a local Hartford man the public support for teachers becomes clear as the man speaks of his son’s job search:

“During the summer, [my son] went to work for the General Electric Co., although I thought that he might consider teaching as a career....He was offered a

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<sup>21</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Why Teachers Leave Profession is Studied,” 24 June 1956.

<sup>22</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “That Radio Campaign For Teachers,” 28 January 1956.

starting salary of \$4,500, plus the opportunity to enroll in a three year business training course, worth another 500 dollars a year. Do we realize that his first-year cash salary will be \$1,300 higher than what the city of Hartford would have paid him to teach? And with Hartford's present schedule of \$200 increments yearly, it would've taken him seven years to have reached \$4,500. Furthermore, he can look forward to a \$10 a week raise at the end of his first year, if he really applies himself to his work, this GE employee can earn a salary of \$6,000 after three years. A Hartford teacher could reach this figure only after 13 years of teaching and only if he had a fifth year of college training in his credit."<sup>23</sup>

The need for higher teacher salaries was not only supported by the general public, as the State Commissioner of Education also saw the situation as needy of attention. Dr. William J. Sanders labeled the circumstances as serious and believed that it must be addressed immediately.<sup>24</sup> With this type of support from both the public and the administration, it is clear that Hartford teacher demands were not going unheard. Furthermore, a 1958 report submitted to the Hartford Board of Education showed teacher dissatisfaction with their pay limited to the minority.

*Personnel Policies*, was the first of three reports submitted to the Hartford Board of Education by Cambridge Consultants in 1958 concerning the quality of the Hartford Public School System. This first report concerned teacher satisfaction and or dissatisfaction with their workplace, the community, and their pay. The results represent the Hartford Public Schools as some of the most desirable places to work as a teacher during the 1950s. The report noted that it is "a matter of common knowledge in

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<sup>23</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Paying Our Teachers Enough?" 28 January 1956.

<sup>24</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Teacher Prospect Called Critical," 22 January 1957.

education circles that the city of Hartford and its school system have enjoyed an excellent reputation as a good place in which to live and work over the past 20 years.”<sup>25</sup> The report went on to note that Hartford had been able to select the most desirable teachers from a long list of applicants. It was also observed that “the great majority of the Hartford professional staff is satisfied with its overall working situation and the component elements of physical conditions, materials of instruction, services to assist personnel, or services provided for individual pupil needs.” The report also noted that some 57 percent of teachers were satisfied with their salaries. One of the only complaints made by a majority of teachers concerned the apathy of the public when it came to the education of their children. Considering the strong support for teachers found in the newspapers, this was an interesting complaint which most likely represented one of the beginning stages of the diverging discourse this study is examining.

These positive results represent the Hartford Public School system as a stable and desirable place to work. Furthermore, the survey represented Hartford as a desirable place to live. However, the report also warned that Hartford’s ability to attract the best teachers may not last forever and seemed to be dwindling, and that the rising percentage of long term substitutes and inexperienced teachers being used in Hartford schools was a cause for concern. This idea was supported by a 1957 *Hartford Times* article. “The outlook for getting new teachers in the schools of Hartford isn’t great, and the city may have to start using teachers with less than the normal four years of college training.”<sup>26</sup> Despite these concerns it is clear that Hartford teachers were mostly satisfied with their workplace and their community.

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<sup>25</sup> *Personnel Policies: A Report Submitted to the Hartford Board of Education*, 1958, in The Hartford Public Library Pamphlet Collection.

<sup>26</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Outlook on Getting New Teachers Grim,” 25 April 1957



During the 1950s very little of the public discourse concerned school finance in the Hartford Schools. However, there were continued reports that Hartford was among the top spenders in education across the state and the nation.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, despite this information there is a series of articles which spoke of discrimination in state aid. These articles claimed that suburban towns were receiving the majority of state aid because of their rapid growth in population.<sup>28</sup> Seemingly though, Hartford was not considered one of the cities being discriminated against. Since it did not appear that the Hartford schools needed state aid in the first place, as Hartford was not mentioned as a town in desperate need of the funding that was being allocated to suburban towns.

The public discourse concerning the problems in the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1950s represented these schools as high quality institutions of learning. Any problems presented were either framed as national or state issues or as problems irrelevant to Hartford. Hartford was presented through the public discourse as an isolated city, which did not have to deal with the major problems occurring in other cities and suburbs across the nation. Despite this, Hartford continued to try to improve its educational practices throughout the 1950s.

*Improving the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1950s:*

The public discourse concerning improving the quality of the Hartford Public Schools focused on excellence in education and teacher satisfaction. Improvements suggested and made to the Hartford Public Schools during the 1950s often improved upon systems that were already working well. Improvements made included higher salaries for teachers, revised curriculum, new standards, the implementation of

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<sup>27</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Hartford People Average More Schooling and Spending," 29 December 1954.

<sup>28</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Cities Ask Aid on School Fund," 19 February 1953.

standardized testing, and a renewed public interest in education. These improvements were presented as ways to further develop, enrich, and supplement the Hartford Public School System, rather than crisis solving reforms that were desperately needed in Hartford schools.

Many of the problems aforementioned were addressed in the public discourse concerning improvements in education. A 1951 *New York Times* article noted that “sweeping modernization and expansion of educational facilities in Connecticut have been proposed in a report of the governor's fact-finding commission on Education.”<sup>29</sup> Other recommendations found in this article included the need for more men in teaching and the necessity for higher pay for teachers. Further state-wide improvements included the creation of “minimum basic academic standards for mathematics, science and social studies courses.”<sup>30</sup> These recommendations did not focus on the problems in education, but rather on the possible growth of education.

On the local level, improvements suggested for the Hartford school system in a 1957 *Hartford Times* article included a streamlined social studies curriculum, the need for all subjects to be brought up to date, the diversifying of the Hartford school curriculum, and a better use of the Greater Hartford Community. These suggestions revolved around a goal of better equipping “students to become thinking citizens aware of their responsibilities, there will be more work on research, using newspapers, analyzing fact versus propaganda, and investigating sources of information, as well as getting a firsthand knowledge of how their community operates.” These ambitious goals place the Hartford schools in a positive light as they were able to look beyond the

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<sup>29</sup> *The New York Times*, Connecticut Looks to Better Schools, 8 January 1951.

<sup>30</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Should the State Set Educational Standards?” 23 December 1957.

national problems of population and teacher dissatisfaction, and look towards improving education.

Other steps taken by the Hartford Board of education to improve Hartford schools included a focus on Hartford's three high schools (Hartford Public High School, Weaver High School, and Bulkeley High School). Improvements in the quality of education at these three schools included the lengthening of classes and of the school day, a focus on mathematics, science, and social studies, the elimination of some of the free periods given to students, and a tightening of the school day and the "school curriculum so that more time will be spent on academic studies."<sup>31</sup> The use of rewards for superior teaching was also suggested as periodic evaluation of all teachers was recommended.<sup>32</sup> Once again these suggestions were not made out of desperate necessity to save the Hartford schools, but instead out of a want to improve them.

Improvements and accomplishments already seen in Hartford's education system represent Hartford schools as superior institutions of learning. A 1953 *Hartford Times* article William Garret noted that "Hartford's median level of educational accomplishments is bettered in Connecticut only by the Stamford-Norwalk area."<sup>33</sup> A 1958 article showed confidence on the part of Hartford schools as a local administrator looked towards educational problems facing the nation. "We're certainly looking ahead with optimism. In the field of teachers, adequate buildings, curriculum and organized public interest, were far ahead of our 1957 position."<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the Hartford Public

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<sup>31</sup> *The New Haven Evening Register*, "Schools In Hartford Move To Intensify Study Program," 15 May 1958.

<sup>32</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "Bigger Reward Urged For Superior Teachers," 9 February 1958.

<sup>33</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Hartford Ranks Second in State School Survey," 2 June 1953.

<sup>34</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Outlook Bright for Schools," 9 April 1958.

School System was succeeding in the 1950s and seemed to be on track to continue as successful educators.

Despite such positive discourse and the appearance of continued success, the Hartford Public Schools did not continue on such a positive path. The public discourse soon diverged to the point of the Hartford schools being viewed as problem schools, rather than promising environments. This shift occurred as Hartford teachers and Hartford residents continued to suburbanize and the focus of the nation turned toward suburbia and suburban schools. We see a hint of this divergence in a 1958 *Hartford Courant* article which summarizes the findings of a Washington conference on metropolitan area problems. “The job of rebuilding the American cities is so enormous today that suburbs hesitate to take any part of the burden. Today, with ever more people in the suburbs, it is easy to forget or dismiss the importance of the city. But more people live in the city than the country.”<sup>35</sup> While this was a relatively isolated complaint it soon turned into the norm, as the problems of the Hartford schools became uncontrollable and the issues of overcrowding and teacher pay reached the point of declining school quality and teacher strikes.

*Problems in the Hartford Public Schools in the 1960s:*

The public discourse concerning problems in the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1960s represented the schools in a state of declining quality with overall teacher dissatisfaction with the school and the community. Problems being discussed were now presented as desperate and almost unfixable, as they consumed the Hartford schools. In order to present these problems in an effective way they have been broken down into the following categories: basic problems, discipline problems, population

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<sup>35</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Metropolitan Government Needs Some Help,” 25 June 1958.

problems, student issues, teacher issues, board of education disputes and teacher strikes. Each of these categories was examined and overall themes and patterns have been noted.

In 1962 Connecticut schools were looking towards higher standards in order to bring all schools up to par. The Commissioner of Education, William J. Sanders, noted that “only 25% of Connecticut’s public schools are good enough at present to measure up to tougher accreditation standards being considered by the State Education Department.”<sup>36</sup> Unlike in the 1950s, in which Hartford schools seemed to be isolated from Connecticut school problems; Hartford was included in those schools which were in need of improvements. Problems that were once national were now local, such as the discipline issues that were discussed in the 1950s.

These national issues, which were once blamed on juvenile delinquency and working mothers, had become serious city problems. Isolated teacher complaints concerning poor home conditions and disruptive student behavior had become wide spread. A teacher at West Middle Elementary School tells how “children tossed raw eggs inside her parked car Friday and how on Monday youngsters deliberately snapped in half a \$35 a pair of eyeglasses she had laid on her desk.”<sup>37</sup> Superintendent of schools, Kenneth L. Meinke, asserted that “the number of pupils in Hartford who come from socially and culturally deprived homes is growing.”<sup>38</sup> The description of Hartford schools and the Hartford community as a desirable place to live and work in the 1958 report, *Personnel Policies*, does not represent the Hartford that was being described in the 1960s. The households of Hartford were now being portrayed as culturally deprived and

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<sup>36</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Sanders Says State Schools Don’t Measure Up,” 5 October 1962.

<sup>37</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “School Discipline Triggers Clash Between Officials,” 10 March 1966.

<sup>38</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Supt. Meinke Gives Go - Ahead Sign For Pilot Work Experience Program,” 25 September 1963.

the students were being viewed as violent. While the issues of cultural deprivation were also considered national issues during the 1960s, they were national city issues. Therefore, their place in Hartford is important to note.

Student achievements were also down in Hartford schools as a test of reading ability showed Hartford pupils reading below average. In 1962 over 29 percent of fifth graders and over 33 percent of eighth graders were reading below potential.<sup>39</sup> In 1969, the problem progressively got worse as “local students slip farther and farther behind as they progress through the system. Some... are as much as three grade levels behind their peers across the nation in reading skills by the eighth grade.”<sup>40</sup> This despite three years of federal and state programs aimed at helping disadvantaged students. Notice that the once absent federal and state aid in Hartford schools was now a major part of improving the school system.

Population problems in Connecticut and in Hartford become crucial in the 1960s, as Connecticut has over twenty-thousand pupils in excess of school capacity.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the sixties Hartford attempted to keep up with the growing population by building new schools but failed in many respects. By 1963 Hartford had spent over eight million dollars to build a brand new high school; however, within a few years it was full to capacity. “Hartford Public High School is almost full already. It should have met the city's school needs for 15 to 20 years. Bulkeley and Weaver High schools are full too, and will continue to be so even when planned additions, now in paperwork stages, are completed.” The inability of Hartford schools to keep up with population demands was

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<sup>39</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Many Students Lag in Reading,” 17 January 1962.

<sup>40</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “City Pupils Still Below Average,” 21 September 1969.

<sup>41</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “School Overload, 4 ½ % in State,” 30 March 1961.

interesting considering that during the 1950s the population increases were seen as under control.

The costs of these new buildings were extremely high, as Hartford's construction expenses in 1970 were 25 percent higher than the national average.<sup>42</sup> There was a good deal of discourse in the 1960s which complained about these high costs; however, according to Don Campbell, a *Hartford Courant* columnist, there were still a good deal of Hartford residents who believed "that schools cost so much more because Hartford educators have such expansive views toward providing the very best of everything for the youngsters."<sup>43</sup> This divergence in discourse illustrated the massive changes going on in the Hartford Public Schools. While there were some who still believed that the Hartford schools represented some of the best in the state, there were others who viewed them as lacking in quality education. This idea was supported by a 1970 *Hartford Courant* article in which one side claims that Hartford schools "are in trouble...and the situation is getting worse." And another which asserted that Hartford schools "are still good schools."<sup>44</sup>

These two examples are clear illustrations of the diverging discourse this study is examining. Arguments over teacher pay represented another area of diverging discourse during the fifties and sixties, as teachers moved away from calm complaints and towards serious striking. Throughout the fifties and into the early sixties, teachers consistently requested higher pay. However, they were unable to request that pay in a public forum since they were not unionized and did not have a single voice. By 1964 teachers were

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<sup>42</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "The Hartford School Crisis Bickering as Costs Mount," 18 May 1970.

<sup>43</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Why Hartford Pays More to Build Its New Schools," 18 May 1970.

<sup>44</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "City's High School Students Experience Revolutions," 6 September 1970.

unionized and asking turned into demanding, as over five hundred teachers refused to sign contract agreements when raises were not given. This was the first time in Hartford's history that teachers withheld signatures and it marked a turning point in teacher negotiations.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, in 1965 it was reported that Hartford had "one of the highest teacher salary schedules in the state...The city [ranked] third from the top among 177 towns and regional school districts."<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, by 1967 it was reported that there was a need for higher teacher salaries in Hartford in order to attract teachers by the next school year.<sup>47</sup> Considering that in 1958, 57 percent of Hartford teachers were satisfied with their pay it seems interesting that by 1964 over five hundred teachers were refusing to sign their contracts. Moreover, it is noteworthy that in 1958 Hartford schools were able to attract some of the best teachers, but by 1967 there was a need for higher pay in order to attract teachers. These two details combined with the fact that Hartford teachers were among the highest paid teachers in the state in the midst of all of this turmoil show declining teacher satisfaction.

This dissatisfaction soon led to major board of education disputes with teacher as contract agreements hinged on teacher demands. By 1964 the Hartford Federation of Teachers had asserted that "Hartford's school system has deteriorated [and] that very little that is good remains in Hartford." In response the superintendent of schools claimed that "Hartford still has an outstanding school system, is a leader in curricular experimentation and improvement and has one of the finest staffs in the country."<sup>48</sup> This type of disagreement among the education profession was in stark contrast to the teacher

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<sup>45</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "550 City Teachers Balk At Signing Agreements," 6 May 1964.

<sup>46</sup> *The Hartford Times*, "Teachers' Salaries Here State's 3d Highest Maximum," 29 September 1965.

<sup>47</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "Higher School Salaries Needed to Lure Teachers, Council Told," 1 February 1967.

<sup>48</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "Meinke Publicly Attacks Federation of Teachers," 2 June 1964.



satisfaction and positive Hartford school and community reputation that was seen in the discourse of the 1950s. This represents yet another example of diverging discourse among the public, one that places the voice of labor against the voice of management.

In April of 1964 board of education disputes and contractual disagreements reached a breaking point as teachers threatened to strike. In response, Mayor Glynn asserted that striking was against the law and that teachers would be punished if they proceeded.<sup>49</sup> Others urged teachers to think about their responsibility, a representative from the Hartford Teachers League noted that a teacher's job is "to build up, not destroy, the moral fabric of our society and our school system. No matter how bitter and frustrated we may be towards the injustice facing us, the answer must lie in a mature, rational, responsible behavior."<sup>50</sup> While this particular strike was averted, the simple threat of striking, and the response of the mayor and the public, showed a great rift in the relationship between teachers and the administration. This was seen again in 1968 following a strike that was not averted, as a local judge spoke out against teachers. "Teachers, in addition to teaching, should also inspire, guide and counsel children assigned to them. They do none of these when they're on a picket line or sulking at home."<sup>51</sup> This divide between teachers, the public, and the administration marked a changing tone in Hartford. A city which in the fifties appeared to be working together to improve education, was now arguing with one another over education. In response to these issues Hartford ordered more surveys and invented new programs aimed at improving the Hartford Public School System.

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<sup>49</sup> *The New Haven Registrar*, "Hartford Teachers Strike Averted, Issues Remain," 7 April 1964.

<sup>50</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "Teachers Hear Moderation's Voice," 2 April 1964.

<sup>51</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, "Judge Warns: End Strike or Go to Jail," 5 November 1968.

*Improving the quality of the Hartford Public Schools in the 1960s:*

By 1965 the Hartford Public School System was in desperate need of change and innovation. An editor of the *Hartford Times* noted “that the hard choices essential to the survival of Hartford ...as a good place to live, work, and raise children are not being made. They're not even being talked about helpfully.”<sup>52</sup> One of the major innovations of the mid-sixties used to combat these poor conditions was an integration program called Project Concern. Project Concern was set up between Hartford and surrounding suburban towns which bused a certain percentage of city children to suburban schools. The way in which Project Concern was presented in the public discourse during the 1960s showed not only the program’s success, but also Hartford’s failures.

These failures become apparent as the descriptions of Project Concern’s successes are examined. Peg Shaw, an education columnist for the *Hartford Courant*, described Project Concern as a program which sends slum children to suburban schools. It also noted that the parents of these slum children were glad to see their kids in suburban schools and wished that their other children could be involved in the program.<sup>53</sup> An education expert, Dr. Thomas Mahn, asserted that the “busing of ghetto youngsters to schools in white suburbia helps alleviate the environmental ravages suffered by the typical ghetto youngster.”<sup>54</sup> The important thing to notice about this discourse was that Project Concern was being looked upon as a savior to the children involved with it. The problem with this was that the majority of Hartford students were not part of the program; therefore, the typical “slum” child living in the “environmental ravages” of Hartford was stuck in those conditions. Thus, while the environment enjoyed by a select

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<sup>52</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Political Paralysis,” 4 October 1965.

<sup>53</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Most Slum Children Like Busing to Suburbs,” 12 February 1967.

<sup>54</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Busing to Suburbia Lauded in Evaluation,” 7 September 1968.

group children, for six hours a day, was changing, the conditions of Hartford and Hartford schools were remaining the same.

Hartford residents and education advocates recognized this inequality and offered their own opinions as to how to improve the conditions of Hartford. In 1964 a group of north end mothers told the board of education that “they're more interested in higher standards, changed teacher attitudes, and an end to overcrowding, then they are in integration.”<sup>55</sup> A group of education advocates asserted that “the busing of the city's children to suburban schools does not... provide productive long-term or short-term answers to this serious and complex problem of educating today's pupils to be understanding and responsible citizens. It has only a fringe relationship to the real issue which is sound and realistic educational opportunity for the children of poor neighborhoods.”<sup>56</sup> These two varying opinions illustrate a diverging discourse among the public as to how Hartford schools should be improved. One side claimed that Project Concern can save Hartford children, while the other side asserted that programs like Project Concern do not help Hartford or Hartford schools.

However, despite such disagreements among the public and the board of education, suburbia was still looked to as the answer to the city's problems. In 1967 there was a suggestion that a series of “superior” and “ultramodern,” schools be built in suburban towns with the help of federal and state aid. These schools were to be composed of 25 percent city children and 75 percent suburban children.<sup>57</sup> Theoretically, the city children would benefit from being surrounded by suburban students in a suburban setting. Once again improvements to the city of Hartford and its schools were

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<sup>55</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “Upgrading of Schools And Racial Mixing Urged,” 25 September 1964.

<sup>56</sup> *The New Haven Registrar*, “Pupil Busing From City to Suburb,” 20 May 1968.

<sup>57</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Superior Schools Proposed for Suburbs,” 29 September 1967.

overlooked as the city looked to the suburbs. However, in 1967 we are reminded by Robert Havigurst, a University of Chicago educator, that “no metropolitan area will survive as a middle-class suburban donut around a central city slum ghetto.”<sup>58</sup> Despite such an assertion, by the end of the 1960s Hartford appeared to be growing into a city slum surrounded by a suburban donut.

The diverging discourse found at the end of the 1960s represented Hartford as an impoverished city surrounded by wealthy suburbia. In 1966 a renewal plan for Hartford schools declared that there was concern over “both [the] quality and equality in Hartford’s educational future.”<sup>59</sup> By 1970 a public survey asserted that there was a need for better teachers, stricter discipline, a revised curriculum, school finance reform, better school management, and revised teaching methods.<sup>60</sup> However, at the same time there was a claim made by three researchers from the University of Maryland that “the Hartford school system provides the kinds of resources for its students that one would expect to find in the wealthy suburban school system.”<sup>61</sup> Despite this positive discourse, Hartford schools were on a path of declining school quality by the end of the 1960s. The result of this continued decline was a school system that in 1999 was described by its students as the core of a rotting apple.<sup>62</sup>

The divergence of public discourse between 1950 and 1970 concerning Hartford Public School quality parallels the decline of the Hartford Public School System. During the 1950s Hartford schools enjoyed satisfied teachers, excellence in education, and a

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<sup>58</sup> *The Hartford Times*, “A School System Study For the Hartford Region,” 24 August 1967.

<sup>59</sup> *The Hartford Board of Education*, “The Renewal Plan For Hartford Schools,” 17 February 1966, in The Hartford Public Library Pamphlet Collection.

<sup>60</sup> *The Connecticut Educational Advisory Committee*, “Connecticut Report of Educational Survey: Operation Lend-An-Ear,” 1970, in The Hartford Public Library Pamphlet Collection.

<sup>61</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “Visitors Laud City School Setup,” 25 October 1967.

<sup>62</sup> *The Hartford Courant*, “From the Inside, City Schools Look Very Different,” 21 December 1999.

positive reputation that reached far beyond Hartford County. During the 1960s Hartford schools were forced to contend with striking teachers, declining school quality, and a poor reputation that pushed Hartford residents to suburbanize. The suburbanization of Hartford teachers was also a major issue during the twenty year span. The relationship a teacher has with the school community directly relates to the relationship a teacher has with their school and their students. The negative effect of teacher suburbanization on school quality becomes clear as the importance of a strong relationship between teachers, students, and the community is examined.

## **The Importance of School – Community Relations:**

The strength of the relationship between a school and the community is important in any setting, be it urban, rural, or suburban. However, the importance of this relationship grows exponentially, if the community is suffering from poverty and is viewed as a socially and culturally deprived neighborhood. Hartford's answer to this problem was to create programs like Project Concern, which took children away from this poverty. However, the busing of children to "superior" schools in suburbia does not help the community recover or the children not involved in the program to survive. What is needed in communities like Hartford, during the sixties and into today, is a strong school-community bond, one that encourages teachers to become part of the community, rather than just instructors of a group of "ghetto" children. The suburbanization of Hartford teachers makes such a relationship much harder to form. A teacher who lives thirty minutes away from the community will find it difficult to help that community after the final school bell rings. Furthermore, the teacher who lives outside of the city may have different political interests than city residents and a different social identity. This is not to say that it is impossible to live in suburbia and be an effective teacher in the city, but simply that it is a much more difficult job.

The final body of literature this study wishes to examine studies the importance of a strong school-community bond. David Cecelski's *Along Freedom Road* offers a close examination of Hyde County, North Carolina and the effect desegregation had on the community as black schools were closed down in order for integration to proceed. Cecelski notes that administrators and teachers of these black schools "believed that local school conditions required special sensibilities in and out of the classroom. They

acquainted themselves with their students at home, in the community, and at church, and they tried to employ all of those institutions to improve the children's education."<sup>63</sup> While Cecelski's book examines desegregation in a rural community, not suburbanization in an urban center, the importance of a strong relationship still holds for the urban setting. The types of innovations seen in Hyde County were needed in Hartford, as student scores dropped, the discipline issue got out of hand, and overall school quality began to decline.

*Their Highest Potential*, written by Vanessa Siddle Walker, offers a glimpse into the responsibilities and importance of being a teacher. *Their Highest Potential* examines legalized segregation in public schools located in Caswell County, North Carolina. Walker examines how teachers and principals in these segregated schools provided the education and means necessary for the students to reach their highest potential. A principal of one of those schools, N.L. Dillard, explains a school's responsibility. "We cannot avoid or take lightly the responsibility which is ours. We are not building bridges, we are not building skyscrapers...we are not even distinguished scientists or chemists...but as I see it our task is one among if not the greatest because we are builders of men and women. We mold minds."<sup>64</sup> A school which is part of a community and whose teachers believe in that community, and whose students believe in their ability to succeed, can reach its highest potential.

Between 1950 and 1970, the Hartford Public School System moved away from such a community and towards a community with teacher dissatisfaction, failing students, and antiquated schools. While teacher suburbanization cannot be directly linked to the

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<sup>63</sup> Cecelski, David, *Along Freedom Road*, (London, 1994), 63.

<sup>64</sup> Walker, Vanessa S, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. (The United States of America, 1996), 149.

declining school quality of Hartford schools, it can be associated with it. A teacher's belief and relationship with the school and the school community is clearly an important factor in the success of a school system. The ability of a teacher to reach out to the students after the school day has ended is much more difficult, and much more unlikely, if they live in a ring town over thirty minutes away. The reasoning behind both teacher suburbanization and the continued decline of Hartford school quality is complex. This study has only scratched the surface in understanding why Hartford schools declined so rapidly and so drastically. However, the examination of the diverging public discourse concerning Hartford school quality between 1950 and 1970 helps illustrate many of the factors which led to the decline. This, coupled with teacher suburbanization gives us a better understanding of how Hartford schools declined so rapidly. Hopefully, current efforts to rebuild Hartford and the Hartford community will reinvigorate confidence in both the schools and the community and will draw teachers and the public back to the schools that were once considered some of the best in the state.



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