

Suburban
Participation in
Hartford's Project
Concern School
Desegregation
Program, 1966-1998



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Source: Hartford Public Library, *Hartford Times* collection, 1968, via Hartford Studies Project website

Background:

- Suggested in 1965 “Harvard Report”; experimental phase began 1966
- Originally conceived as two-way, but became voluntary city-to-suburb only
- Administered by Hartford Board of Education until 1998; similar program restarted by CREC in 1999

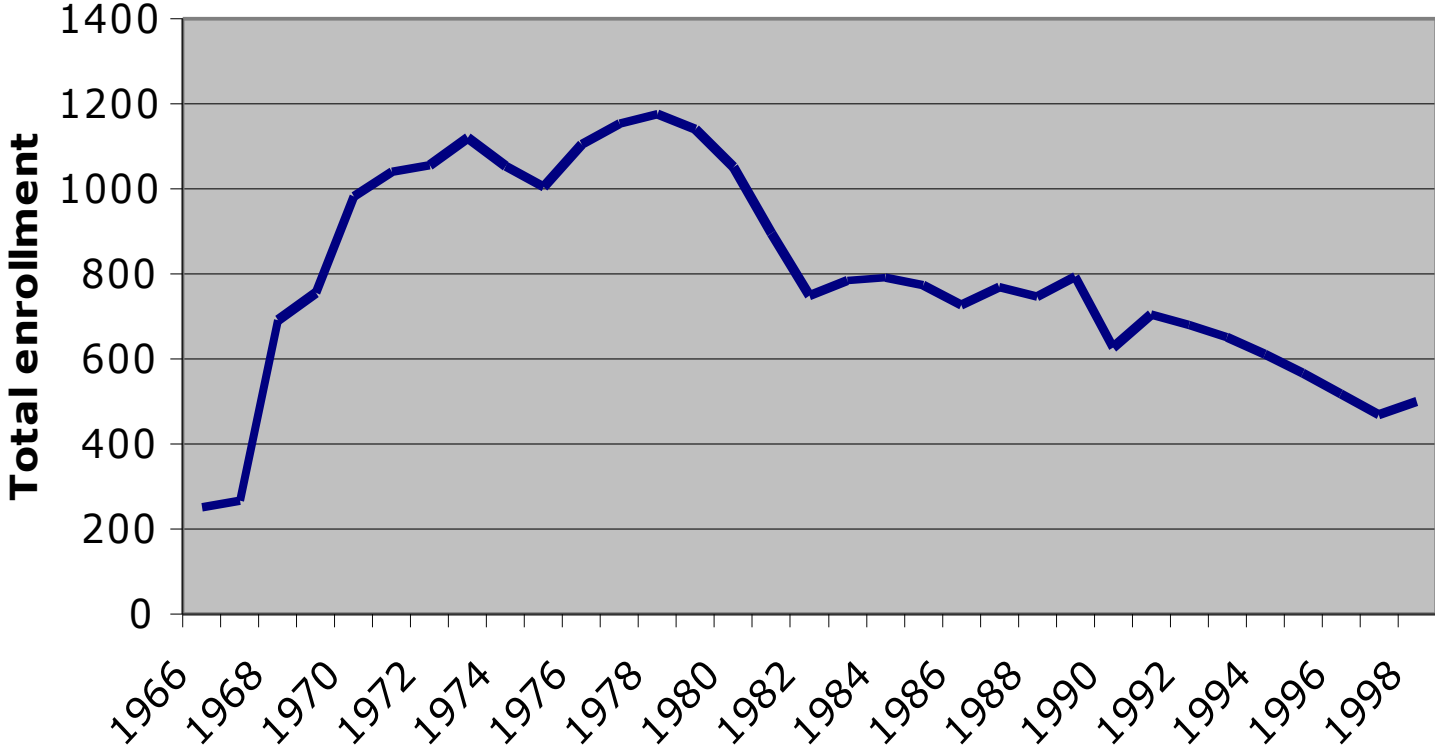
RESEARCH QUESTION:

Which towns participated (or declined to participate) in Project Concern, what was the extent of their involvement, and what factors motivated their decisions?

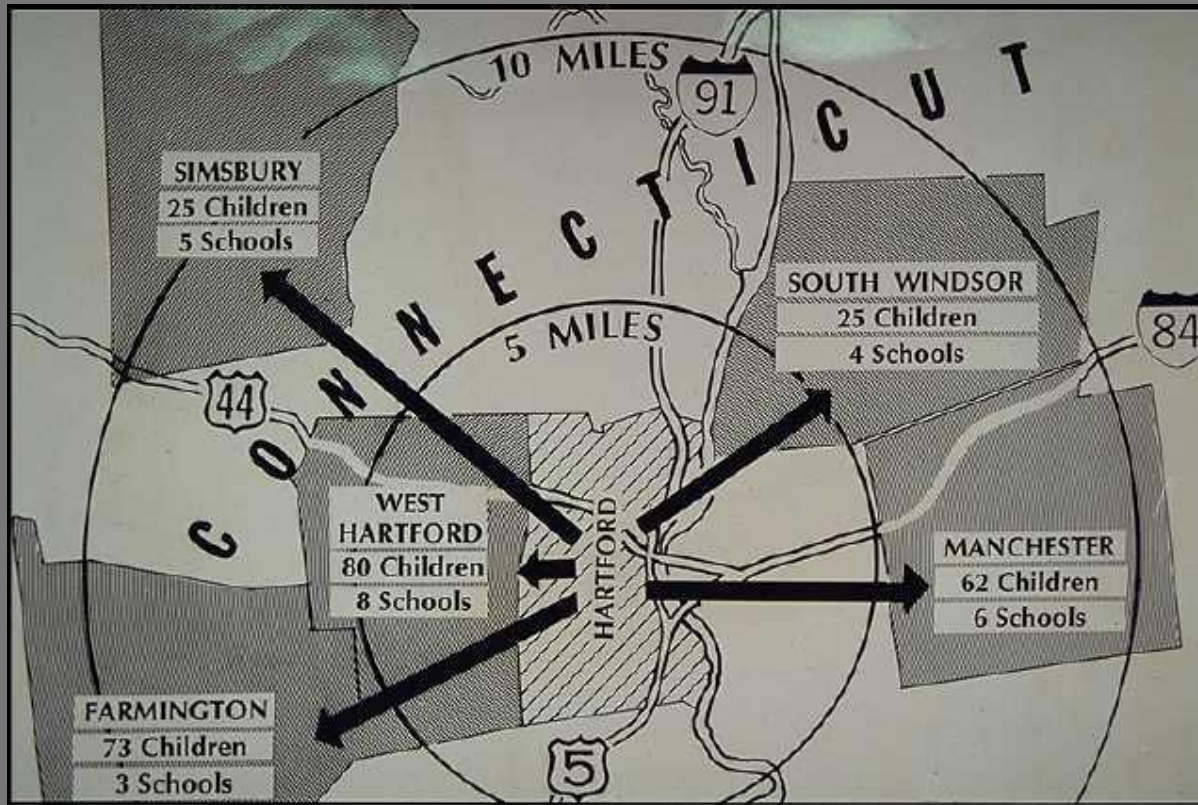
Why does the research matter?

- voluntary desegregation has potential, but programs like this have not always succeeded - why?
- 2003 Sheff settlement calls for major increase in city-suburb voluntary busing

Total Project Concern Student Enrollment SYE 1967-1999



Source: Project Concern reports



Source: Hartford Public Library, *Hartford Times* collection, 1968, via Hartford Studies Project website

Categories of Towns

➤ EARLY PARTICIPANTS

Farmington, South Windsor, Simsbury and West Hartford

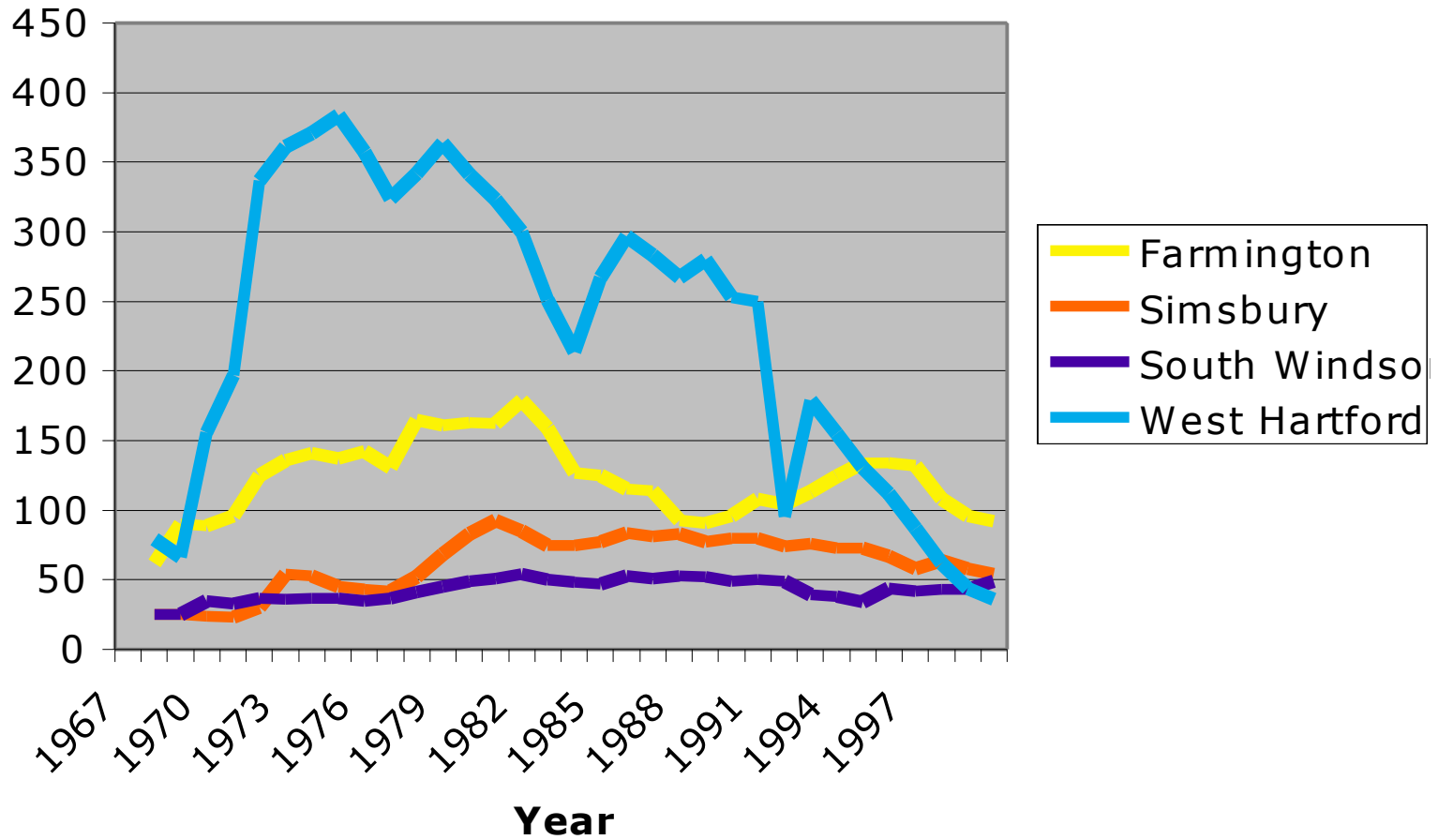
➤ LATE PARTICIPANTS

Glastonbury and Avon

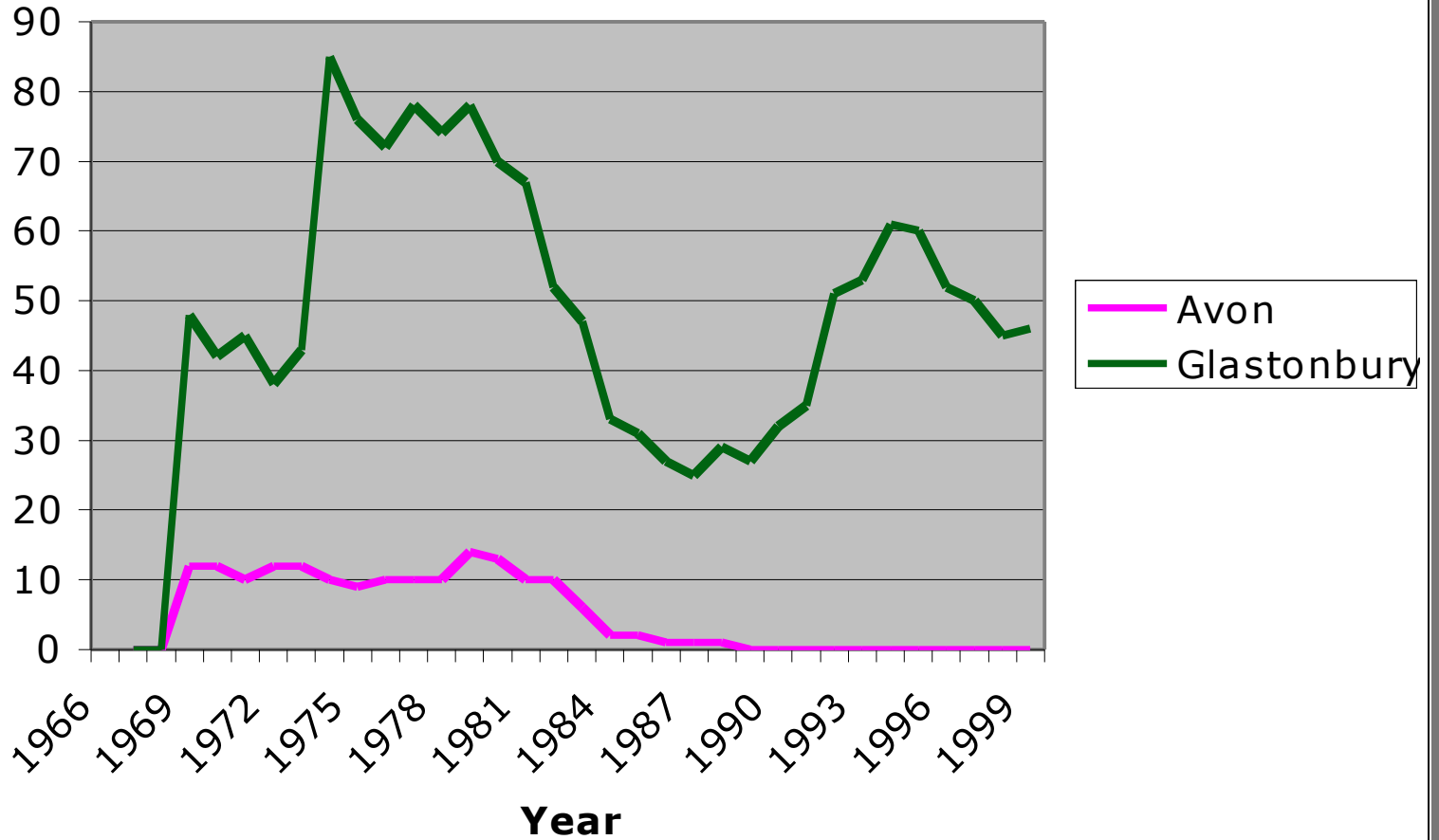
➤ NON-PARTICIPANTS

Bloomfield and East Windsor

Early Participants



Late Participants



Types of Source Material

➤ Numerical Data

Project Concern enrollments, Census data

➤ Newspaper Coverage

Hartford Courant, Hartford Times, etc.

➤ Reports

“Schools for Hartford” (Harvard report), etc.

Four Factors:

- 1) Racial Composition
- 2) Financial Pressure
- 3) Racial Language
- 4) Community Leadership

1) Racial Composition

- Some towns lacking racial diversity
- Bloomfield almost 14%
- West Hartford less than 1%

2) Financial Pressures

- Funds used to help schools
- When funding decreases so does participation
- Some towns help when funding threatens to end PC

3) Racial Language

- Race played a role in many concerns expressed by residents
- Simsbury noted as not having problems with racial aspect of PC
- Farmington and West Hartford were reported as having heated debates dealing with race

4) Community Leadership

- Many town leaders took neutral position publicly
- Glastonbury residents took on leadership position by making their position heard
- West Hartford Board chairman publicly in favor of PC

Conclusion:

- Different factors affected towns to various degrees
- Factors shift in the thirty-three years of operation

All suburbs did not respond the same simply because they are suburbs