

On The Line: How Schooling, Housing, and Civil Rights
Shaped Hartford and its Suburbs

*Jack Dougherty
and contributors*

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Preface

On The Line



How Schooling, Housing,
and Civil Rights Shaped
Hartford and its Suburbs



Book-in-progress, last updated on: 2018-08-07

On The Line makes visible the hidden boundaries that divide metropolitan Hartford, Connecticut, and tells the stories of civil rights struggles to cross over, redraw, or erase these lines in schooling and housing.

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About the book

On The Line tells the story of schooling and housing boundaries that shaped American metropolitan life over the past century, and also the civil rights struggles of families and activists to cross over, redraw, or erase these powerful lines. Set in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, and its emerging suburbs, the book explains how this metropolitan area became one of the most racially and economically polarized regions in the northeastern United States. The story highlights how government, business, and white middle-class families drew lines to distance themselves from others, and the evolving coalitions that have sought to reform the relationship between private housing and public education.

This **digital-first book** was designed for the open web. The narrative is wrapped around digital evidence—including interactive maps, videos, and documents—to make hidden boundaries more visible, and to amplify the voices of people who challenged these lines. *On The Line* is best read in your web browser, where readers may fully explore the evidence, follow links to related sources, and connect with the author and other readers through comments. In addition to the web edition, the same text (with static images and links) also appears in the downloadable e-book versions, and an inexpensive print edition to come.

In an **open-access book**, history becomes more widely available to the public, without barriers of price or permissions. As educators, we believe that knowledge becomes more valuable when it is easily discoverable and accessible, not hidden behind password-protected paywalls. Moreover, the liberating power of history—and civil rights history in particular—should be freely available, especially for the communities of people who lived these stories. Anyone may freely read this book online or download it from the web, and after it is completed, purchase or borrow a low-cost paperback edition.

Written **for the liberal arts**, the book blends interdisciplinary scholarship with highly-engaged student learning. It draws on the fields of history, social sciences, and policy analysis in urban America, and more than a decade of collaborative research with undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and community partners at Trinity College. Rather than simply report our results, we describe our discovery process, so that others may expand upon, or even challenge our findings, in future works. We also strived to explain new concepts and make the text accessible for younger students and residents of the Hartford region.

In sum, *On The Line* blends the best aspects of conventional publishing and web innovation. The main narrative still looks and feels like a scholarly book, divided into chapters and backed up by endnotes. But the web platform allows us to embed digital evidence on the page, and to link directly to external resources located elsewhere. As a result, this book delivers a more comprehensive, coherent, and connected work of scholarship than what was previously possible in print-only publications, or scattered online journal articles and blog posts, at no cost to the reader. Flip the page—in whatever format you prefer—and find out for yourself.

How to Read

Instructions on how to use TOC or search... TO COME

How to Cite

To cite this book-in-progress, please refer to the web edition (rather than pdf or ebook editions), since this online version is easiest for all readers to access instantly.

For general citations of the book, see these samples of common academic styles:

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Sample Chicago-style note (for a specific chapter, with multiple authors): Elaina Rollins, Clarissa Ceglie, and Jack Dougherty, “Writing Greater Hartford’s Civil Rights Past with ConnecticutHistory.org,” in *On The Line:*

How Schooling, Housing, and Civil Rights Shaped Hartford and its Suburbs (Trinity College, book-in-progress, 2018), <http://ontheline.trincoll.edu/>.

What if web links break? All past and present editions of *On The Line* include the stable web address (<http://OnTheLine.trincoll.edu/>), which redirects readers to the current version of the book.

The web edition of the book also includes internal links to different pages within the book (e.g. selected chapters, bibliography, etc.) If any internal links break, this platform has been set up to automatically redirect readers to the book's home page.

The book also contains external links (such as endnotes that refer to other articles, books, or websites). If any external links break, each endnote contains a full citation and external web address, which readers may search in the "Way Back Machine" at (<http://archive.org>) to see the most recent version of this site. Donate to the Internet Archive, the non-profit organization that maintains this valuable collection of our digital history as a free public service.

How to Comment

TO COME

Contributors

...many more TO COME

Vianna Iorio (Trinity 2019) co-authored several chapters: *Jumping the School District Line* . . .

JiYun (Lisa) Lee (Trinity 2017) co-authored the chapter *Jumping the School District Line*.

Jasmin Agosto (Trinity 2010) co-authored the chapter *Mobilizing Against Racial Steering and Redlining* and researched 18th-19th century school documents, and decades of school residency cases.

Research assistants

Richelle Benjamin (Trinity ****) researched school residency cases and conducted oral history interviews.

Acknowledgements

TO COME

Contact the Author

TO COME... with related works...

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GitHub

Our GitHub open-source repository (<https://github.com/ontheline>) contains all of the source code for the book (including images, data, and interactive charts and maps), and is freely shared under an MIT license. Learn how to work with GitHub and create your own charts and maps in Data Visualization for All (<http://datavizforall.org>) by Jack Dougherty and contributors.

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Chapter 1

My Introduction to the Lines

Learning My Lines

“Are you looking to buy a home?” came a voice from behind me. I turned around and faced a white man wearing a big smile. Somehow, he knew exactly what I was doing.

“Just looking,” I replied. “Got a job interview tomorrow and I’m just looking around.” It was a warm Sunday afternoon in May 1999, on my first visit to the City of Hartford. I was standing on the sidewalk in front of a three-story house with a for-sale sign, on a street somewhere near what local residents called the West End neighborhood, based on my limited knowledge of the city at that time. There was no open house, nor did I have an appointment to meet a real estate agent. I simply wanted to get out of my rental car and walk around to get a feel for this neighborhood. My hands held the real estate section of the Sunday newspaper and a city street map, which I had purchased at a nearby gas station about fifteen minutes earlier.

“Hold on a second. My wife’s a Realtor. She’s right next door and I’ll bring her over.” The man walked back across the street, and returned a minute later with a woman. She introduced herself, mentioned that she happened to be visiting a client on this block, and asked what brought me to Hartford.

I explained that I had a job interview the next day at Trinity College, located about two miles from where we stood, but was just looking around. What I also knew—but didn’t tell her—was that the search committee seemed interested in my application, it was very late in the academic hiring season, and if all went well and they offered me a job, they would expect a speedy reply. Time and money were tight for my partner Beth and me. She worked full-time, we had two young children, and I didn’t have a steady job. Leaving home to do another multi-day job interview was a major strain on our family life. That Sunday afternoon probably would be my only opportunity to scope out local housing opportunities in case we needed to make a quick decision about moving to Hartford.

The real estate agent rattled off names of people we might know in common. But none of them were familiar to me, since I had not yet met anyone at the college or the city. She turned the conversation to ask what kind of home I was looking to buy. All of this was premature, I explained. The interview was not until Monday, and I didn’t know whether or not they would offer me the job.

“Do you have children?” she asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “Two kids, ages five and two.”

“You might want to look on the other side of Farmington Avenue,” she suggested, pointing to a major street a couple of blocks north. The agent handed me her card, we exchanged goodbyes, and she departed in a car with her husband.

I stood there on the sidewalk, dumbfounded, trying to make sense of what had just happened during my first half-hour in Hartford. This agent had gently steered my housing search based on what she had quickly

learned about me as a white middle-class professional, and more importantly, as a parent of two school-age children. Somewhere down the street there was a line—not yet visible to me—but one that clearly stood out in this agent’s mind, and most likely in the minds of families living on opposite sides of it.

Memories of that sidewalk encounter rolled around in my head over the next few days, weeks, and years. The job interview at Trinity was successful, but that opportunity forced my spouse and me to face several difficult decisions about moving our family to the Hartford region, a theme that we will return to later. While living and learning about the city and its suburbs, my eyes now sharply focused on the lines that differentiate where families reside and send their children to school. Boundaries that were once invisible to me now vibrantly stand out in my mind, while crossing over them on foot, bike, or car. At work I teach my students about the lines, and together we map them on computer screens, measure their influence, record their meaning in people’s lives, and write about what we learn to share with the public. Three types of questions—on the history, pedagogy, and policy of these lines—have captured my attention over the past fifteen years:

- Why did schooling and housing boundary lines become so influential in shaping US metropolitan life over the past century?
- How can we make these hidden lines more visible, and amplify the voices of people who challenged them, to educate future generations?
- What does the evolution of these boundaries, and different activists’ strategies to challenge them, tell us about our present-day policies?

This book seeks to answer these questions in a format designed to invite readers like you into the story, to explore the evidence, pose your own questions, and perhaps share comments about the influence of these lines on each of our lives.

Bridging the History Gap

On The Line is written for students and residents of the Hartford region, as well as for scholars of metropolitan history. On the local level, this work of public history weaves together two vitally important stories: the rise of increasingly rigid schooling and housing boundaries that shaped metropolitan Hartford over the past century, and the civil rights struggles of families and activists to cross over, redraw, or erase these powerful lines. To learn how the city of Hartford and its surrounding suburbs became one of the most racially and economically divided regions in the northeastern United States, the book traces how government, business, and white upper-class families drew boundary lines to distance themselves from others who they perceived as a threat to their position. Moreover, to make us wiser about future prospects for change, it explores how civil rights coalitions crafted different strategies over the decades to challenge and reshape boundary lines, with mixed success, in both the education and housing sectors. More people need to learn these stories about the partitioning of the Hartford region into different towns, school districts, attendance areas, and housing zones, which created disparate social worlds with dramatic differently odds for life outcomes. Whether people grew up or went to school on one side or the other, these divisive boundaries are part of our shared history. Living and learning on the lines have profoundly shaped all of us.

For scholars, *On The Line* argues that we cannot understand the broader narrative of twentieth-century US history without the explanatory power of housing and schooling. Indeed, suburbanization was caused by multiple factors: job migration, interstate highways, tax policies, urban rebellions, and white flight. But this book argues that the dynamic relationship between housing and schooling played a central role in shaping places like Connecticut, which we have not fully understood because a prior generation of historians split these topics into separate bodies of literature, and essentially drew boundaries around these disciplinary subfields. On one side of this scholarly divide, urban and suburban historians (such as Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*, and Ken Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*) described how housing policies and racial discrimination fueled the post-World War II decline of cities and expansion of outlying suburbs, but schools did not play a meaningful role in their equation. On one side, educational historians who followed the lead of David Tyack (*The One Best System*) focused on the rise and fall of big-city school districts, yet paid little attention to their relationship with suburbs. Whereas most educational historians halted at the city line, urban and suburban

historians generally stopped at the schoolhouse door.¹

Outline of the Book

On The Line seeks to bridge this disciplinary divide by showing how the dynamic relationship between schooling and housing reshaped our cities and suburbs. During the immediate post-war years of mass suburban housing, public schools in many of these formerly rural towns were seen as inferior to the big-city districts, and a deterrent to outward migration. But in the late 1950s and '60s, a convergence of three groups—real estate industry, pro-suburban government, and white middle-class homebuyers—invested in suburban public schools, marketed them to private homes, and defended their attendance boundary lines. This schooling-housing convergence became more powerful in US families' lives in the human capital market of the 1960s to today, when education credentials have become the most reliable means to transfer middle-class privilege to one's children. Americans seeking upward mobility began to embrace what we recognize today as a familiar formula: buy a home in the right neighborhood, in order to send your children to a good school, to increase their odds of being accepted into a top-ranked college, to help them to land the perfect job. Moreover, wealth-based schooling and housing boundaries became a more legitimate way for upper-class white families to defend and pass on their privileges, without resorting to overtly racial boundaries of the past, while still distancing their children from other students perceived to be less desirable peers. America's story of urban decline and suburban ascent, and civil rights struggles to challenge these inequalities, cannot be told without the interaction between two key ingredients—housing and schooling—and the boundary lines that bind them together.

This book concentrates on the metropolitan Hartford story, and is divided into multiple chapters of narrative and evidence, organized thematically and chronologically to advance key elements of the broader historical argument.

Chapter 2: Defining City and Suburban Lines begins by challenging us to reconsider the familiar poor cities and rich suburbs narrative that is so ingrained in our present-day thinking. But a century ago, these roles were reversed. Connecticut's capital city was the center of financial wealth, adorned by its crown jewel of public education, Hartford Public High School. Urban schools earned such a strong reputation through the early 1900s that they attracted families from outlying towns to send their children into the city's borders. By contrast, public schools in areas that we consider today to be elite suburbs, were relatively weak rural districts at this time. This part of the book begins to explain the reversal of fortunes between Hartford's city and its suburbs over time. Larger colonial-era tracts of land were carved up into smaller town boundaries, state laws formed more rigid school district lines, and suburban voters blocked urban annexation. Today's Connecticut is highly fragmented into 169 municipal governments, and most manage their own public school districts and land-use decisions, with weak regional governance. Even the phrase "metropolitan Hartford," which appears in this book, has no official nor consistent definition. As a result, self-interested suburban policies with state governmental support have generated some of the nation's highest levels of inequality between the central city and its suburbs, and also across suburbs of different socioeconomic standings.

Chapter 3: Separating with Color and Class Lines explains how the boundaries of white middle-class privilege have shifted over time, from explicit racial barriers to more sophisticated hurdles, and from the schooling to the housing sector. The Connecticut legislature banned schooling for out-of-state black students during the 1830s, and Hartford leaders voted to officially segregate public schools for a brief period in 1868, and proposed it again in 1917. After civil rights activists overturned these policies, Hartford officials quietly continued to separate many black and white students into the 1970s, through its decisions on locating new schools and redrawing attendance lines. In the housing sector, the color line gained more governmental support in the

¹Arnold R Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Kenneth T Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974). For an extended version of this historiographical argument, see Jack Dougherty, "Bridging the Gap Between Urban, Suburban, and Educational History," in *Rethinking the History of American Education*, ed. William Reese and John Rury (New York: Palgrave MacMillan Press, 2007), 245–59, http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cssp_papers/5/.

1930s and '40s, with federal and local policies that openly prohibited home mortgages and public housing for blacks, and legally protected white-only property deeds. After activists overturned these governmental restrictions, the Connecticut real estate industry continued the color line through discriminatory steering and lending, even after the federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed these practices. Eventually, as overt racism became harder to defend, Connecticut's white suburbs relied more on exclusionary zoning policies, with "color-blind" rules that required higher-price single-family home construction, effectively blocking lower-wealth families, and by extension, most people of color. As a result, Connecticut's city-suburban barriers trace their legacy to color lines that have faded over time, but remain in force today primarily due to class lines, supported by local and state government.

Chapter 4: Selling and Shopping the Lines explores the pivotal relationship between public schooling and private housing, which fundamentally reshaped metropolitan life and upward mobility strategies in Connecticut in the latter half of the twentieth century. By contrast, in the early 1900s, when a smaller proportion of youth pursued secondary education and beyond, most families did not choose their homes based on the boundary lines of desirable public schools. Prior to the 1950s, schools were relatively weak in attracting middle-class families to the suburbs, but in post-war human capital markets, education became a powerful magnet. Pro-suburban government, real estate interests and prospective homebuyers converged to create the practice commonly known today as "shopping for schools." Agents began to advertise private homes by their location in higher status public school areas. Local school leaders competed for upper-class families by offering curricular extras. State legislators invested in suburban schools, and legitimized school-by-school rankings by publishing standardized test results. Upwardly mobile families with children sought more desirable school attendance areas, and paid higher prices for private homes that included access to this public good. Overall, the rise of shopping for schools unites the twin narratives of credentialism and consumerism in American metropolitan history.

Part 5: Challenging the Power Lines tells the stories of everyday families and civil rights activists who sought to cross over, redraw, or erase schooling and housing boundaries in metropolitan Hartford, focusing primarily on the past five decades. When comparing these stories, we learn that the tools of privilege do not stand still, but evolve when confronted by civil rights challenges. In turn, this requires newer generations of activists to continually rethink and revise strategies to address the limited successes of prior years. After Connecticut civil rights advocates won legislative bans against overt racial discrimination in public housing in the late 1940s, and most private housing in the 1960s, they needed to create more sophisticated strategies to combat racial steering and redlining practices, since these were more difficult to prove without direct testing and quantitative studies. Similarly, although activists won a 1965 state constitutional amendment for equal public schools, initial efforts to implement this law were equally challenged in moving students or dollars across city-suburban district lines. This portion concludes with the 1996 courtroom victory of the *Sheff v O'Neill* school integration plaintiffs, where Connecticut's highest court outlawed the segregation of Hartford minority students, but left the specifics of the remedy to be determined by a suburban-dominated political process.

Chapter 6: Choosing to Cross the Lines describes the present-day political compromises that have emerged from battles over schooling and housing boundaries. When civil rights activists finally pressured Connecticut leaders to deliver on the promise of integration with the Sheff remedies, beginning in 2003, the agreement hinged on voluntary public school choice that did not require participation by any individual, or initially, any suburban district. Instead, state leaders agreed to expand interdistrict magnet schools, with highly-desirable curricular offerings in the arts, sciences, and other specialties to attract white suburban families to voluntarily enroll their children in the same school as urban students of color. The Sheff remedy signals a tangible civil rights victory. As of 2015, state funding for 48 interdistrict magnet schools and the Open Choice city-suburban transfer program enrolls about 12,000 Hartford minority students (or 45 percent of the total) in racially integrated settings. But compromises come at a cost. Interdistrict schools merely blur the boundary lines, rather than erase the root causes of inequality. Furthermore, this voluntary integration plan protects suburban white privilege, and our data analysis shows how it favors more privileged Hartford families. The Sheff remedy has attracted critics from all sides, but the suburban-dominated state government has resisted change and threatened to unilaterally drop all support, despite the judge's order. At present, the Sheff schooling compromise-and related housing voucher policies that promise greater choice-are caught in a standoff, with suburban interests holding the upper hand.

Conclusion: Where Do We Draw the Line? offers historical reflections on present-day policy decisions *to come*.

The end of the book contains two additional chapters for readers interested in the behind-the-scenes process that resulted in this this book. Creating On The Line details the behind-the-scenes decisions, research methods, and web technologies used to build this open-access digital book. Also, Teaching with On The Line describes how the book emerged while working with liberal arts undergraduates and community partners in metropolitan Hartford, and offers lesson ideas to help students of all ages delve into key questions and digital sources in this volume.

About this book



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Chapter 2

Defining City and Suburban Lines

2.1 The Richest City in the Nation

Over a century ago, the press declared Hartford as “the richest city in the United States” per capita, a label from the past that seems strange to anyone familiar with its extreme poverty in the present day. That tagline came from journalist Charles Clark, who wrote a cover story on Connecticut’s capital city in 1876 for *Scribner’s Monthly*, one of the most popular illustrated literary magazines of its time. While Clark may not have invented this slogan, he certainly popularized it, based on some loose arithmetic of the city’s accumulated wealth, relative to the size of its population, approximately 40,000 people. His essay opened by surveying the value of vast financial and industrial corporations based in the downtown area. The city’s well-known insurance companies, including The Hartford and Aetna, held more than \$113 million in assets, which rebuilt Chicago after its disastrous 1871 fire. Added together, the city’s numerous banks amassed over \$50 million in deposits and capital. Five railroad lines fed Hartford’s extensive factories, including Colt’s Arms Manufacturing Company, “perhaps the most famous in the country” for its rifles and revolvers during the Civil War. Summed together, these businesses pushed the city’s taxable property value to more than \$200 million.

In addition its financial assets, Clark also praised Hartford’s abundant cultural riches. The nation’s best-known authors, Samuel Clemens (more commonly known as Mark Twain) and Harriet Beecher Stowe (whose best-seller, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, influenced the Civil War), both took up residence in the city, alongside many of their literary companions, editors, and publishers. In addition to serving as the state capital, Hartford prized its extensive libraries, museum, and hospital. “The Hartford school buildings are said to the finest in the State,” Clark added, and called special attention to his alma mater, Hartford Public High School, the second oldest in the nation, which also enjoyed “a reputation with all the leading colleges as one of the best of all the preparatory schools.”¹ In fact, the education that young people received in the city’s public school system far surpassed what was available in the outlying rural towns, known today as the suburbs.

Explore the Source: Hartford as “The Richest City in the United States,” 1876

Scribner’s Monthly in 1876 declared Hartford as the richest city in the United States, relative to its population. Digitized by Google Books.²

Today we recognize Clark’s “richest city” slogan as boosterism. The twenty-eight-year-old son of a local congressman was a rising reporter at the *Hartford Courant*, the nation’s oldest continuously published newspaper, and would later become its editor and owner. Clark “had an investment in the city,” observes

¹Charles H. Clark, “The Charter Oak City,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 13, no. 1 (November 1876): 1–21, https://books.google.com/books?id=2q_PAAAAMAAJ/&pg=PA1/#v=onepage/&q/&f=false

²Clark

historian Steven Courtney, and later served on the boards of corporations and philanthropies his essay praised.³ He did not offer a definitive statement on Hartford's total wealth per capita, nor any direct comparison to financial statistics for other cities, to the extent they were available. Today, the idea of measuring a city by the wealth of its total corporate wealth, rather than the assets actually owned by individual residents, makes little sense. In 1903, nearly four decades after Clark's essay, skeptics questioned some of its claims. One critic was Alexander Merriam, a Hartford Theological Seminary professor in the brand-new field of sociology. Although Hartford was still "computed as one of the richest cities of its size in the country," he observed, "local wealth is not so large and available as the statistical aggregate might seem to indicate." Residents included both "wealthier citizens... scattered in different parts of the city" and also "a slum of almost the first magnitude" of the poorest citizens along the banks of the Connecticut River. While Hartford still had significant pockets of wealth, they were not uniformly distributed. In fact, while Samuel Clemens lived in Hartford, he and his co-author satirically named this era the Gilded Age, referring to a thin gold layer that symbolizes wealth, but masks underlying social problems.⁴

But none of this skepticism mattered, as long as Hartford's slogan as the "nation's richest city" stuck in the public mind. It contained an element of truth that ordinary people could see with their own eyes, whenever they caught sight of a wealthy resident or passed by one of their prestigious homes in the city's neighborhoods. In fact, the "richest city" label predated Clark's 1876 article. Five years earlier, advocates for an art museum announced their fundraising appeal by declaring that "Hartford is the richest city of its size in the United States, we believe," but must construct an institution "if she is to keep her pre-eminence, or is to be a city worthy of her wealth and acknowledged culture." A similar 1878 appeal argued that while "Hartford is said to be the richest city in the country... so far, however, it fails to sustain adequately a public library."⁵ Variations on the "richest" theme appeared in Hartford church sermons, commencement addresses, and local news and feature stories, sometimes accompanied by tax or bank records, into the early 1920s. Whether or not this claim was based in fact, enough people believed it to publicly repeat it.⁶

³Steve Courtney, "Commentary: Was Hartford 'the Richest City in the United States'?" *Hartford Courant*, October 2014, <http://www.courant.com/opinion/op-ed/hc-op-courtney-was-hartford-richest-city-in-america-20141010-story.html>. On Clark, see Norris Galpin Osborn, "Charles Hopkins Clark," in *Men of Mark in Connecticut: Ideals of American Life Told in Biographies and Autobiographies of Eminent Living Americans* (W.R. Goodspeed, 1906), 230–34, https://books.google.com/books?id=ARFh_Sbpg84C/&pg=PA230; Joseph F. Nunes, "The Lasting Legacy of Charles Hopkins Clark," *Hartford Courant*, October 2014, <http://www.courant.com/courant-250/your-moments/hc-courant-clark-profile-20141018-story.html>; Joseph F. Nunes, "Chapter Four: 'Fighting Joe' and Mark Twain," *Hartford Courant*, October 2014, <http://www.courant.com/courant-250/your-moments/hc-courant-chapter-four-20141018-story.html>.

⁴Alexander R. Merriam, *The Social Significance of the Smaller City* (Hartford, Conn.: Hartford Seminary Press, 1903), <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/64385345>, reprinted as Alexander R. Merriam, "The Social Conditions of the Smaller City," *The Hartford Courant*, July 1903, 13, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/555173471?accountid=14405>. See also skepticism about the corporate assets underlying the "richest city" claim in "The Richest City," *The Hartford Courant* (1887–1922), October 1903, 10, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/555173471?accountid=14405>. On satirical name, see Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of to-Day* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1873), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000664544>.

⁵Although the Wadsworth Atheneum opened in Hartford in 1844 and currently is described as one of the oldest art museums in the nation, the original buildings included an art gallery, the Connecticut Historical Society, and the Young Men's Institute (which later became the Hartford Public Library). Advocates sought funding for a separate dedicated art museum and public library. See "An Art Museum," *Hartford Daily Courant*, April 1871, 2, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/553680505?accountid=14405>; "A Suggestive Contrast," *Hartford Daily Courant*, October 1878, 2, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/554105478?accountid=14405>; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, "History," accessed July 28, 2015, <https://thewadsworth.org/about/history/>.

⁶For a selection of "richest city" claims, see First Church of Christ (Hartford, Conn.), "Address of Edward Everett Hale," in *Commemorative Exercises of the First Church of Christ in Hartford, at Its Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary, October 11 and 12, 1883* (Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1883), <https://books.google.com/books?id=1ncsAAAAAYAAJ>; "Girl Graduates: Closing Exercises of Mt. St. Joseph Seminary Cluster of Historical Essays on Hartford," *Hartford Courant*, June 1903, 5, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/555144638?accountid=14405>; "Hartford as the 'Richest City': A Great Financial Center," *Hartford Courant*, October 1908, C1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/555586930?accountid=14405>; Otis Skinner, "Save Twain Home, Urges Otis Skinner: Should Be Easy for Richest City Per Capita in This Country," *Hartford Courant*, April 1920, 6, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/556799530?accountid=14405>; "Hartford Holds Lead as Wealthiest City: Over 21,000 Local People Pay Federal Income Tax—Stamford Second and New Haven Third 10 Per Cent. In State Assessed," *Hartford Courant*, November 1921, 1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/556971490?accountid=14405>; "Wealth of Hartford Clearly Shown by Bank Statements: Per Capita Wealth, \$600, Equalled by No Other City in U. S.—1921 Bank Dis-Counts Total \$455,975,029 Insurance in Lead as Chief Industry City Known for Its Manu-Facturing for over 150 Years—Center for Traders and Buyers for Radius of 50 Miles," *Hartford Courant*, September 1922, X1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/557107212?accountid=14405>.

By the end of the twentieth century, the “richest city” slogan had turned upside down. Census 2000 ranked Hartford as one of the poorest major cities, with a population over 100,000, in the United States. When measured by the percentage of families living in poverty, Hartford was the second poorest, with 28 percent of its residents earning less than \$17,600 for a family of four. Only the border city of Brownsville, Texas had a higher family poverty rate. When measured by median household income, Hartford was the fourth poorest city with a typical household earning only \$24,820, just behind Miami, Brownsville, and Buffalo. Connecticut’s capital city first appeared among the ten most impoverished major cities in the 1980 Census. As of this writing in 2015, the city has not risen out of this dismal category. Although Hartford has inched upward from the near-bottom of the list in recent years, the token change in its rating has been caused by the sharper decline of cities such as Detroit and Flint, Michigan, rather than substantive improvements on its own.⁷

After the 2000 Census became public, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story on the depths of Hartford’s poverty. Reminding readers of the city’s former wealthy status, the article pointed to the powerless mayor, internal racial divisions, and public schools that were “among the worst performing in the nation” as markers of urban decline. “The *NY Times* piece was a teeth-kicker,” recalled Stan Simpson, a *Hartford Courant* columnist. “It rehashed the well-documented problems in the capital city—poverty, education, crime, race relations—and gave scant attention to any progress.” It was a riches-to-rags story, with no hope of redemption. Tom Condon, another *Courant* columnist, complained that the *New York Times* story “described Hartford as a decaying hulk of a once-grand city” and “left the impression that we’re all on skid row.” In response, the *Courant* published its editorial, “In Defense of Hartford,” which did not question the facts, but criticized the pessimistic portrayal of their city. “It hurts when outsiders point out the ailments that afflict Connecticut’s capital,” the editorial began, describing how this intensely negative national news coverage “felt like an insult.” The spin on Hartford had made a full circle back to the city’s oldest newspaper, where Charles Clark originally crafted the slogan of wealth more than a century ago.⁸

Where did the money go? What became of the wealth that once made Hartford “the richest city” in the nation into the early 1900s? During the twentieth century, the fortunes of the central city and its suburbs were reversed. According to Census 2000, when Hartford was rated as the second-poorest city by family poverty, its metropolitan statistical area (the city and suburbs combined) rose to the sixth-richest in the nation, as measured by median household income. Consider the size of this gap. Inside Hartford’s city boundaries, the median family earned \$24,820 in 2000, but the median family in the metropolitan area earned \$52,188, more than twice that amount. If we could exclude the city data from the surrounding metropolitan area, that gap would increase even further. The Gilded Age did not magically disappear from Hartford; most of it moved to selected suburbs.⁹

One way to visualize the spatial redistribution of wealth from the City of Hartford to its suburbs is to track home values by town during the twentieth century. For each decade in the map below, the average dwelling or single-family home value is indexed to the region to correct for historical price inflation, with higher values represented by darker shades of green. While not a precise measure, the rough differences over time are striking. In 1910, the region’s highest home values were located in the City of Hartford and its neighboring suburb of West Hartford. In second place were inner-ring suburbs with manufacturing jobs (such as East Hartford, Manchester, Windsor, and New Britain), followed by outlying farming towns to the west and southeast. In 1910, the average home value in Hartford was nearly \$5,000, four times more than the average \$1,200 home value in the agricultural community of Avon.

A century later, that relationship had reversed, as home values in the city fell to nearly the lowest in the

⁷See census data sources in “Calculating Wealth and Poverty in Past and Present” chapter, TO COME in this book.

⁸Paul Zielbauer, “Poverty in a Land of Plenty: Can Hartford Ever Recover?” *The New York Times*, August 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/26/nyregion/poverty-in-a-land-of-plenty-can-hartford-ever-recover.html>. Contrast the *NY Times* portrayal with a later story by the *LA Times*, which Simpson noted had a more positive spin: David Lamb, “Once-Gilded City Buffing Itself Up,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 2003, <http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jun/15/nation/na-hartford15>. See reactions by Stan Simpson, “Capital Progress: Read All About It,” *Hartford Courant*, June 2003, B1, <http://articles.courant.com/2003-06-28/news/0306281788>; Tom Condon, “‘Troubled City’ a Victim of Geography,” *Hartford Courant*, September 2002, B1, <http://articles.courant.com/2002-09-12/news/0209120303>; “Editorial: In Defense of Hartford,” *Hartford Courant*, August 2002, A10, <http://articles.courant.com/2002-08-27/news/0208270795>.

⁹See census data sources in “Calculating Wealth and Poverty in Past and Present” chapter, TO COME in this book.

region, while some outlying farm towns—known today as elite suburbs—climbed to the top. In 2010, the average sales price for a single-family home in Avon climbed to \$536,000, more than three times the average \$178,000 sales price in Hartford. In some eyes, the once-powerful city-based economic powerhouse had become a doughnut—a fiscally depressed center surrounded by an affluent suburban ring—though with wide variation in the middle.¹⁰

Explore the Map: Home Values in Hartford County, 1910-2010

Follow the money in this interactive map as the most valuable single-family homes (in dark green) shifted from the capital city to selected suburbs over time. Click the tabs or use arrow keys to advance years. Hover over towns for details. Home values have been indexed (where county average = 1.0) to adjust for rising prices over time. Missing values appear in gray. View source data for 1910-1980 from Connecticut Tax Commissioner, author's calculation of average dwelling value from equalized assessments; 1990 from Capital Region Council of Governments, median single-family home sales price; 2000-10 from State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management, average single-family home sales price (2000-2010). Learn more in "Calculating Wealth and Poverty in Past and Present" chapter, TO COME in this book.¹¹

How do we explain this reversal of fortunes between Hartford's city and its suburbs? Histories of twentieth-century suburbanization point to multiple factors, including white flight, urban rebellions, interstate highways, and job migration. But this book argues that the pivotal relationship between private housing and public schooling reshaped central Connecticut. During the first half of the twentieth century, the city's public school system—and its crown jewel, Hartford Public High School—earned the highest reputation in the region, while most small-town and rural school districts were viewed as woefully behind. When the first generations of city dwellers moved to outlying suburbs, they were attracted by housing opportunities, not substandard schools. Yet this relationship quickly changed during the latter half of the century, when rising suburbs actively competed for upper-class white families and created elite public schools that acted as powerful magnets, while state policies kept most low-income black students at a distance. As the most privileged families fled Hartford, the concentration of poverty and limited resources led the city's most prized high school to nearly lose its accreditation in the 1990s, while elite suburban public schools rose to the top of new ranking systems.

To tell this story about the changing relationship between housing and schooling, this book begins by retracing the lines that were drawn to separate the city and suburban towns, and later its school districts. During the 1800s, town boundaries were still a work-in-progress, and public school districts were relatively porous until the early twentieth century. Connecticut legislators sharpened these divisions under a 1909 school consolidation law, with deep consequences for a school desegregation lawsuit that arose eight decades later. Yet while mass suburbanization prompted more metropolitan governance for water, sewer, and transit between towns in the region, public schooling became more restricted to only families that resided inside local district boundaries. In today's politically fragmented Connecticut, most policies about housing and education are made either at the State Capitol or in 169 individual town halls and school boards. Even the phrase "metropolitan Hartford" has no officially consistent meaning here. As a result, local self-interested policy decisions have generated some of the nation's highest levels of inequality between the city and its suburbs, and also between suburbs of different social standing. This chapter visually describes *what* happened in the Hartford region, as a prelude to later chapters that explain in more detail *why* it happened, and *how* civil rights activists have challenged the status quo in different ways.

2.2 Carving Up Town Boundaries

TO COME

¹⁰See home value data sources in "Calculating Wealth and Poverty in Past and Present" chapter, TO COME in this book.

¹¹OnTheLine, "Map: Home Value Index in Hartford County CT from 1910-2010," 2018, <https://ontheline.github.io/otl-home-value/index-frame.html>.

2.3 A Golden Age for City Schools

TO COME

2.4 Challenges for Rural and Suburban Schools

TO COME

About this book



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Chapter 3

Separating with Color and Class Lines

TO COME

Chapter 4

Selling and Shopping the Lines

TO COME

Chapter 5

Challenging the Power Lines

5.1 Jumping the School District Line

by Vianna Iorio, JiYun Lee, and Jack Dougherty

In 1984, Sandra Foster, a Black single mother living in Hartford, was searching for a better school for her teenage son, Trevor. She described him as “a good kid” who liked to go to school and learned some topics faster than other students, but ran into problems at Hartford Public High School, which in her view was “geared for special education.” Sandra explained that it was “almost impossible” to get Trevor into more rigorous classes, and he was turned down when he tried to raise the issue with his teacher. Trevor was then referred to the district’s alternative education center for students it deemed not suited for regular classrooms. Faced with this bleak prospect, Trevor considered dropping out of high school altogether. This was the breaking point for the Foster family, and Sandra knew she had to take immediate action. “For a child like that to say that he is contemplating dropping out of school, it’s time to start thinking about alternatives,” she later told a reporter.¹

Sandra Foster decided to “jump the line” by enrolling Trevor, a resident of the city of Hartford, in the suburban school district of Bloomfield, located immediately to the north. Registering her son to attend a public school outside of her legal residence, without permission, was a serious step; although many parents had done it before, her decision could interrupt his education if they were caught. Sandra decided on Bloomfield because he could live with his aunt, who legally resided in the district. Trevor transitioned well into Bloomfield High School by fall 1984 and even became a starting player in the boy’s varsity basketball team. There was no record of him getting in conflict with peers or teachers and Sandra believed “he was much better off in Bloomfield.” Although she had to live apart from her son, “jumping the line” was the right decision in her mind, because city-suburban school district boundaries were unjust. “I didn’t deal this deck of cards,” she later explained, “I just have to play them,” and her son Trevor “should be able to go where he can to get the best education.”²

5.1.0.0.1 Play Video about Sandra Foster

EMBED VIDEO HERE

Sandra Foster, a Black Hartford resident, was arrested by a suburban school district for “stealing” a public education for her son in 1985. Although this local television appearance reveals her discomfort in discussing

¹William Mendoza and Anita Ford Saunders, “Jumping the Line,” *The Public File* (Hartford, CT: WVIT Channel 30 television broadcast, August 1985), <http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/jackdougherty/clips/jumping-the-line/>.

²Dave Drury, “Bloomfield Cracking down on Non-Residents in Schools,” *Hartford Courant*, March 1985, A1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/758745359?accountid=14405>; Paul Bass, “Case on Residency and Schools Halted,” *New York Times*, June 1985, CN14, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/111144867?accountid=14405>.

*her case, local and national activists publicized her arrest to draw attention to broader issues of city-suburban inequity. Source: video excerpt from Mendoza and Saunders, WVIT copyright 1985, included here under fair-use guidelines.*³

Suburban districts referred to non-resident students like Trevor Foster as “line jumpers,” and school officials usually took administrative action to “disenroll” them from the district. But this case was different. In April 1985, Bloomfield police arrested Sandra Foster and three other parents, and charged them with a first-degree felony for larceny, for “stealing an education” worth \$4,000, the average expenditure per pupil. This highly-publicized action was unprecedented in Connecticut, and perhaps the nation, as no one in recent memory had been charged as a criminal for enrolling their child in a public school outside of their home district. The arrests highlighted race and city-suburban boundaries. Of the four, three were Black parents from Hartford (Sandra Foster, Elizabeth Brown, and Claude Johnson), and the fourth was a White parent, Norma Wright, who had previously lived in Bloomfield but moved to the adjacent suburb of Windsor due to a divorce. The timing was intentional. Bloomfield town leaders had authorized the arrest warrants in the early spring, just before town residents were asked to approve the next year’s school budget. Furthermore, White Bloomfield residents became increasingly anxious as the town’s high school tipped from majority-White to majority-Black in the early 1980s. Bloomfield leaders’ decision to introduce a felony charge clearly was designed as a scare tactic to discourage Black Hartford families from “jumping the line” into their racially transitional suburban school district. Town leaders played on then-President Ronald Reagan’s racist “welfare queen” stereotype to portray Black Hartford parents like Sandra Foster as “stealing an education,” but looked the other way when White parents had done the same thing a generation earlier.⁴

While the arrests drew the public eye and may have intimidated some parents, they also sparked a civil rights debate on the growing disparity between city and suburban schools in metropolitan Hartford. Sandra Foster’s advocates and civil rights activists capitalized on her arrest to raise pivotal questions on one’s right to an education. Is it possible to “steal” a public education that the state is required to provide to all students? Did the growing inequality between Hartford and its suburbs prove that Connecticut was not meeting its constitutional obligations for equal educational opportunity for all students? These questions were not just important in the abstract. The arrests forced a closer public examination of education inequity across the Hartford region. During the 1980s, city-suburban school district boundaries became increasingly contested due to a combination of the rising disparities between urban and suburban schools, increasing costs of public education, and rising White suburban barriers against non-resident students of color, in contrast to more relaxed policies towards non-resident White students a generation ago. Although Sandra Foster’s case was eventually dismissed in court, public criticism against these arrests helped set the context for the landmark *Sheff v O’Neill* school integration lawsuit four years later, in 1989, where plaintiffs directly challenged the legality of the public school boundaries that divided Hartford and suburban students.

Line Jumping Over Time

“Jumping the line” was a familiar issue in Bloomfield. When police arrested Sandra Foster in 1985, school leaders estimated that perhaps 100 other non-resident students also attended the Bloomfield School District (about 4 percent of the total enrollment), while others disputed that figure. Beginning in the early 1970s, Bloomfield school officials began to investigate suspected non-residency cases, and Bloomfield police officers photographed students as they stepped off city transit buses that rolled down Blue Hills Avenue from Hartford to the suburban high school. In the 1975-76 school year, Bloomfield school administrators held 58 non-residency hearings, and about half of those students were removed from the district. “Parents want a better education and they’re concerned about the discipline problem in city schools,” assistant superintendent Joseph O’Donnell told the Bloomfield Board of Education in 1976. “A few come from Windsor [a neighboring

³Mendoza and Saunders, “Jumping the Line.”

⁴Drury, “Bloomfield Cracking down on Non-Residents in Schools”; Dave Drury, “2 City Parents Are Charged in Residence Case,” *Hartford Courant*, April 1985, AA1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/755821077?accountid=14405>; Dirk Johnson, “Quality of City Schools Tested in Trial on Residency: Equity of Schools Tested in Arrests,” *New York Times*, May 1985, CN1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/111304566?accountid=14405>; Mendoza and Saunders, “Jumping the Line.”

suburb], but most [come from] Hartford... We don't get them from lily-white suburbs like Avon or Simsbury."⁵

In prior decades, most line-crossers moved in the opposite direction, from poorly-resourced rural and early suburban schools to better-resourced city schools. As described in the chapter, A Golden Age for City Schools, Hartford Public High School acted as a magnet that drew 20 percent of its class from outside the city lines, with families paying tuition of about \$3 per week, in 1882. Around the same time, Bloomfield town leaders lamented that so many families from their rural community sent their children by railroad each day to attend Hartford's public schools. "The practice of sending scholars out of town to school-though entirely justifiable and desirable in many cases-has the effect to diminish the interest in our own schools," Bloomfield leaders observed in 1888. "While it is admitted that the Hartford schools are, in every respect, excellent, there is a tendency among our people to undervalue our own schools." In the town of Wethersfield, on Hartford's southern border, a residency scandal arose at a school meeting in 1917. "It was brought out at the meeting that four members of the school board are sending their children to Hartford schools and have no real interest in Wethersfield schools 'other than to lower the taxes as much as possible'," the press reported. Decades later, in 1952, the Hartford school district enrolled at least 18 "out-of-town" students whose families paid \$240 per year for them to attend the city's public high schools, even though this tuition was about half of the actual cost per pupil. A family from the White rural town of Marlborough argued in 1959 that their daughter had the right to attend Hartford public schools, at no tuition, by claiming that they kept a residence above the father's place of business in the city. Overall, Hartford's widely-acclaimed city school district retained its desirable status among line-crossers through the middle of the twentieth century, and for the most part these non-resident students were allowed to attend Hartford schools, with the caveat that they had to pay tuition.⁶

But Bloomfield began to attract significant numbers of non-resident students in the 1960s, and as the racial and economic context shifted in the 1970s and 80s, town leaders began treating "line jumpers" very differently. Wayne Porter, the Bloomfield High School principal from 1962 to 1968, recalled in his 1985 letter to the editor that "the problem of non-resident students has existed for many years." During the "racial unrest" of the 1960s, many White families pulled their children out public schools in Hartford's North End, and enrolled them in nearby Bloomfield schools, long before they bought or rented property there. "The [Bloomfield] school administration elected to look the other way in order to avoid controversy," Porter confided. "What seemed like a reasonable policy 15 years ago was definitely faulty. It made it appear there was no policy and that non-resident student enrollment was sanctioned by the Bloomfield public schools."⁷

When Bloomfield's non-resident students shifted from White to Black in the 1970s and 80s, town leaders took a more aggressive stance against "line jumpers," by launching police investigations and pressing charges against parents like Sandra Foster. Although former principal Porter preferred to frame the events of 1985 primarily as an "economic matter" due to the rising costs of schooling, rather than a "racial issue," looking back we cannot ignore this racial reality: the suburb criminally prosecuted Black Hartford parents in the 1980s for taking the same actions that they condoned by White Hartford parents in the 1960s.

White racial anxiety at Bloomfield High was driven by the dramatic shift in racial demographics during this period. The school enrolled only 13 percent Black students in 1967, which rose to 37 percent by 1977, then climbed to 62 percent by 1984. But the primary driver of this racial change was plummeting White enrollments. Between 1967 and 1984, the number of Black high school students gradually rose from 160 to 421, while the number of White students sharply dropped from 1073 to 267. Furthermore, Bloomfield High

⁵"Residency Rule Called Good, If Done by Book: Bloomfield," *Hartford Courant*, July 1976, 44, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/544588627/1D33A73396B64DADPQ/1?accountid=14405>; Chauncey Bailey, "Non-Resident Students Again Attending Bloomfield Schools," *Hartford Courant*, September 1976, 45, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/544716872?accountid=14405>. Dorothy Billington, the only Black member of the Bloomfield Board of Education in 1985, disputed the estimate of 100 non-resident students, in Drury, "Bloomfield Cracking down on Non-Residents in Schools."

⁶Bloomfield, *Town of Bloomfield Annual Report*. (Bloomfield, Conn.: Bloomfield Town Clerk, 1888), p. 20, Connecticut State Library; "Kicks on Schools in Wethersfield: Dissatisfaction Expressed at Parents' Meeting: City Gets Sons of Board Members," *Hartford Courant*, April 1917, 11, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/556458859/FBC9D952EEF04BB6PQ/1?accountid=14405>; "Schools Jump Tuition Fees for Out-of-Town Residents," *Hartford Courant*, January 1952, 21, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/561696118/6D35FCF5D55B4EACPQ/1?accountid=14405>; "Couple Ask Tuition-Free Schooling for Girl but Residency Is Disputed," *Hartford Courant*, February 1959, 6, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/553011819/18F2091DEB304451PQ/1?accountid=14405>

⁷Wayne Porter, "Non-Resident Students Long a Problem," *Hartford Courant*, May 1985, B8, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/758689031/fulltextPDF/2FA3B34AF5BD4A2EPQ/1?accountid=14405>.

had recently tipped from a White-majority to a Black-majority school in the early 1980s, setting into motion broader conflicts around the case of Saundra Foster.⁸

5.1.0.0.2 Chart of Racial Change at Bloomfield High School, 1967-84

INSERT IMAGE

Bloomfield High School tipped from a White-majority to a Black-majority student population in the early 1980s, just before Bloomfield town leaders authorized the arrest of Saundra Foster and other parents. Source: CT State Department of Education, Fall 1967, 1977-1984, with data interpolated for missing years.

Just as White parents left the city school district for the suburbs in the 1960s and '70s, many Black parents sought to follow similar paths, using whatever means were possible. The Project Concern city-to-suburb desegregation program opened new doors in 1966, and enabled nearly 1200 Black Hartford students to attend predominantly White suburban schools at its peak in 1980. But suburban district participation was voluntary, and the total number of lotteried seats available declined to below 800 by 1984, making this strategy more difficult.⁹ Other Black Hartford parents who earned sufficient incomes sought to rent apartments or buy homes in suburban towns to purchase access into suburban public schools, as many Whites had done a generation earlier. But racial steering by real estate agents, and other forms of housing discrimination, continued to block many Black families from entering White towns or neighborhoods during the 1980s and beyond.¹⁰

Given these constraints, Saundra Foster and others registered their children under relatives' addresses in affordable suburbs such as Bloomfield and Windsor, located on Hartford's northern border, with growing numbers of Black residents. Both of these districts reported around 20-30 non-residency cases annually in the mid-1980s, though Windsor school administrators handled these through registration checks. By contrast, West Hartford, a wealthier suburb that historically kept out most Black renters and homebuyers, reported only 6 non-residency cases each year, despite having much larger student enrollments.¹¹ Black Hartford parents had fewer familial ties in West Hartford, and their children would have clearly stood out in West Hartford high schools in 1984, each of which enrolled between 10 to 40 Black students.¹²

Moreover, Bloomfield dramatically shifted its stance on non-resident students when town leaders decided that the police department, rather than school administrators, should investigate and arrest violators. Police charged Saundra Foster and three other parents with first-degree larceny, a class B felony offense that could bring up to 20 years in prison and a fine up to \$10,000 in Connecticut at that time. Initially, police planned to charge the parents with third-degree larceny for defrauding Bloomfield taxpayers of \$4,001, the average expenditure per pupil in Bloomfield public schools. (If students had remained in Hartford schools, the average would have been around \$3,700, or 8 percent less.) But Bloomfield police increased the charge to first-degree larceny on the grounds that the crime included an element of "extortion" by parents. When the story broke in March 1985, attorneys at the Connecticut Department of Education told reporters that they had never before heard of a case where local law enforcement pressed criminal charges in a school residency case.¹³

⁸Connecticut State Department of Education, *The Distribution of Negroes in the Public Schools of Connecticut, 1967-68* (Hartford, 1967); Connecticut State Department of Education, "School and Grade Enrollment by Race, 1977-1984," n.d.

⁹Jack Dougherty, Jesse Wanzer, and Christina Ramsay, "Missing the Goal: A Visual Guide to Sheff V. O'Neill School Desegregation: June 2007" (Hartford, Connecticut; Storrs, Connecticut: The Cities, Suburbs and Schools research project at Trinity College and the University of Connecticut Center for Education Policy Analysis, 2007), http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cssp_papers/6/.

¹⁰Lyn Bixby et al., "Some Real Estate Agents Discriminate Against Black Home Buyers: Two Connecticut Series," *Hartford Courant*, May 1989, A1+, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/1637840117?accountid=14405>.

¹¹Dave Drury, "'Line Jumping' Is Issue Statewide, Officials Say," *Hartford Courant*, April 1985, B1, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/758695451?accountid=14405>.

¹²Connecticut State Department of Education, "School and Grade Enrollment by Race, 1977-1984." for Hall and Conard High Schools, respectively, October 1984

¹³Drury, "Bloomfield Cracking down on Non-Residents in Schools."; Drury, "2 City Parents Are Charged in Residence Case.". Dollar amounts were reported by the press in spring 1985. A year later, educational cost reports for the 1984-85 academic year became available and were higher. Net current expenses per pupil were \$4,522 in Bloomfield, and \$4,216 in Hartford. Connecticut Public Expenditure Council, *Local Public School Expenses and State Aid in Connecticut* (Hartford: CPEC, n.d.), <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/3498569>, 1986.

Through their highly-publicized scare tactics, the Bloomfield police adopted President Reagan's racial and gendered stereotype of "welfare queens" who "stole" funds from more-deserving taxpayers. But Saundra Foster did not fit this description. She was a Black single mother who also held a white-collar job at Travelers' Insurance in Hartford.¹⁴ Yet even if Saundra Foster had received government assistance, her son would still be entitled to a free, quality, public education. But suburban law enforcement did not care about the state's constitutional rights to equal educational opportunity. Instead, by appealing to White suburban distrust of Black urban mothers, the police exploited racist and sexist images to uphold exclusionary school district lines.

Some news reporters also played into suburban readers' anxieties over non-resident students. In the *Hartford Courant* daily paper, journalists occasionally referred to Hartford residents in Bloomfield public school as "illegal students," which conjured up popular images of "illegal aliens" on the US-Mexican border.¹⁵ The *Courant's* political cartoonist highlighted this "illegal" theme by drawing Black Hartford students being smuggled into Bloomfield High School in the trunk of a car, as if they were crossing the US border, with Black suburban students posing questions about the identity of the intruders.¹⁶ By labeling Hartford students as "illegals," the media implied that Hartford students should be denied their state constitutional right to equal educational opportunity, and distanced suburban readers from the growing problem of city-suburban inequity.

5.1.0.0.3 Political Cartoon on City-Suburban Borders

Criticizing the Arrests

When police arrested Saundra Foster and three other parents, local and national activists seized this opportunity to call attention to the broader issues of city-suburban inequity and the state's constitutional rights to equal education. State Senator Frank Barrows, who represented Hartford's predominantly Black North End and Bloomfield, accompanied Foster when she turned herself in at the Bloomfield police station. Barrows publicly criticized Hartford's "deplorable" educational system. "It's a shame that someone has to be arrested while trying to educate their children," he told reporters, and praised Foster as "the next Rosa Parks." Reverend Jesse Jackson, the nation's most prominent civil rights activist, publicly denounced the arrests while speaking in Hartford at the National Association of Black Mayors. "These parents have exposed. . . a two-tier educational system," Jackson declared. "Other parents should be encouraged to take their children to Bloomfield or wherever good education exists." Local television publicized the arrests and national newspaper headlines announced that the quality of city schools was on trial in Connecticut. Even Gerald Tirozzi, the State Commissioner of Education, acknowledged his growing concern over the "two Connecticuts" and the widening disparity between urban and suburban public schools.¹⁹

Foster's attorney, M. Donald Cardwell, raised the most provocative question: "How does one steal a free public education?" The underlying issue was not larceny across school district lines, but the growing socioeconomic disparities between districts. The median household income in 1980 ranged from under \$12,000 in the impoverished city of Hartford to over \$24,000 in middle-class suburbs such as Bloomfield and West Hartford, to nearly \$32,000 in upper-class suburbs such as Avon.²⁰ "When you educate the poor people in one group, the middle class people in another group, and the upper-class people in the other third group, something unfair is happening," Cardwell observed.²¹

When Saundra Foster's case moved from Bloomfield into state criminal court in May 1985—and public scrutiny of the arrests intensified—the charges against her and the other parents were dropped. State's Attorney John M. Bailly recommended dismissal after he researched Bloomfield's recent shift on school residency cases from

¹⁴Drury, "2 City Parents Are Charged in Residence Case."

¹⁵Drury, "Bloomfield Cracking down on Non-Residents in Schools."

¹⁶Bob Englehart, "Editorial Cartoon: Bloomfield High School," *Hartford Courant*, April 1985, C8, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/755822125?accountid=14405>.

¹⁸Englehart

¹⁹Drury, "2 City Parents Are Charged in Residence Case"; Johnson, "Quality of City Schools Tested in Trial on Residency"; Mendoza and Saunders, "Jumping the Line."

²⁰US Census, Table 57a: Summary of Economic Characteristics for Towns, 1980.

²¹Mendoza and Saunders, "Jumping the Line."

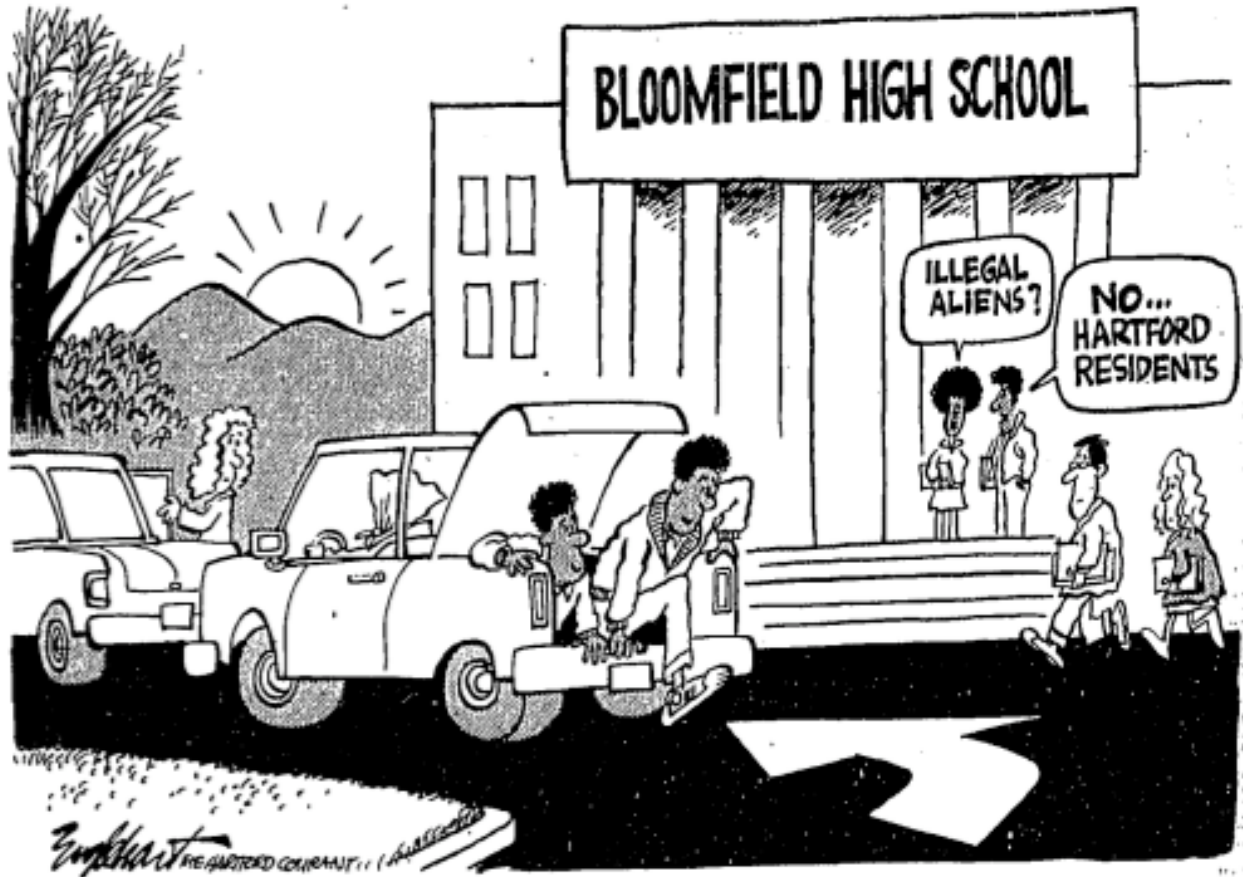


Figure 5.1: Amid the controversial arrest of Sandra Foster, Hartford Courant political cartoonist Bob Englehart portrayed Black Hartford students arriving at Bloomfield High School hidden in the trunks of cars, conjuring imagery of “illegal aliens” crossing the US-Mexico border. Source: Hartford Courant, copyright 1985, included under fair-use guidelines.¹⁸

administrative action to police enforcement. Singling out Foster and the other parents, he warned, would appear to be highly selective and “could be looked upon as malicious prosecution.” Furthermore, the Foster case spoke “to the core of the issue of the constitutional right to a free education,” Baily cautioned. “These questions should be litigated. But this is not the right forum.” Judge Joseph Purtill agreed with the State’s Attorney and dismissed the case.²²

After the court dropped the charges against Foster and other parents, Bloomfield leaders recognized their mistake in authorizing the arrests, but devised a more acceptable means to heighten enforcement of residency requirements. The Bloomfield Town Council and the Board of Education jointly adopted a resolution to allot more funds to check residency status and enforce policies through school administrative action before resorting to criminal proceedings.²³ Also, the Bloomfield Board of Education began charging tuition to non-resident students, which gave the district a legal basis to pursue civil suits to recover costs.²⁴ As educational costs continued to rise during the 1980s, Bloomfield and other suburban districts began to routinely hire residency officers – and private investigators in some cases – to actively police their boundaries. “The student expulsion business is booming,” read the news story that tracked the number of cases identified by school residency officers in towns bordering Hartford, such as Bloomfield, East Hartford, West Hartford, and Wethersfield. “It’s very cost efficient,” noted one suburban school superintendent, who explained that identifying and removing nearly 30 non-resident students saved the district over \$130,000, well worth the \$30,000 annual salary of the school residency officer, who previously was a town police officer. Local journalists wrote stories about accompanying residency officers on “stakeouts” to catch lime-jumpers. Suburban districts created tougher requirements for new students during school registration, such as showing a property deed, lease, or utility bill as proof-of-residency. Heightened enforcement of rigid city-suburban school boundaries – with administrative enforcement rather than criminal prosecution – became the new norm.²⁵

Saundra Foster gladly stepped away from the spotlight when her case was dismissed in 1985. But the activists who came to her defense continued to raise public awareness of city-suburban inequity, and questioned whether it is possible to “steal” an education that Connecticut is constitutionally obligated to provide to all students. Four years later in 1989, a coalition of Black, White, and Puerto Rican parents from city and suburban schools, along with a creative team of civil rights attorneys, filed their lawsuit to challenge racial and economic segregation in metropolitan Hartford, which came to be known as the *Sheff v. O’Neill* case.

About the contributors: Vianna Iorio and JiYun Lee both wrote essays on this topic for the Cities Suburbs and Schools seminar, which Vianna later merged and revised, in collaboration with Jack Dougherty. Also, Jasmin Agosto and Richelle Benjamin researched school residency sources.

About this book



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This book-in-progress was last updated on: 2018-08-07

²²Bass, “Case on Residency and Schools Halted.”

²³Dave Drury, “Bloomfield Alters Its Policy for School Residence Cases,” *Hartford Courant*, August 1985, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/758752577?accountid=14405>.

²⁴Jane Latus Jones, “Schools Will Accept Tuition Non-Residents,” *The Bloomfield Journal*, August 1985, 1.

²⁵“Residency Officer’s Job Is in Full Swing,” *The Bloomfield Journal*, November 1985, 9; Jon Elsen, “Bloomfield Officials Laud School Officer’s Work,” *The Hartford Courant* (1923-1991), April 1986, B2, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/899845262?accountid=14405>; Rick Green, “Not in His Town: If You Don’t Live in Bloomfield, William Mahoney’s Job Is to Make Sure You Don’t Go to School There,” *Hartford Courant*, February 1992, H1+, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/1976803002?accountid=14405>; Linda B Hirsh, “Schools to Use New Policies to Exclude Out-of-Town Residents,” *Hartford Courant*, July 1992, B5, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.trincoll.edu/docview/1984955026?accountid=14405>.

Chapter 6

Choosing to Cross the Lines

TO COME

Chapter 7

Where Do We Draw the Line?

TO COME

Chapter 8

Creating On The Line

TO COME

8.1 Publishing with Bookdown on GitHub Pages

by Jack Dougherty

TO DO: Include a longer introduction on why it matters, and then how we publish with Bookdown on GitHub Pages with custom domain Note: See also way to include hypothesis commenting and other open review tools at: <https://benmarwick.github.io/bookdown-ort/>

GitHub and Bookdown reminders

- GitHub Pages set to publish from `master/docs`
- Bookdown settings: build all book formats into the `docs` folder
- GitHub Pages custom domain setting adds `CNAME` file to `docs` folder; do not delete
- Manually move `404.html` into ‘docs’ folder, since not auto-built; do not delete
- *CHECK* if `google-analytics-otl.html` needs to be manually placed in `docs` folder
- Manually add `X.X-footer.Rmd` to end of each chapter
- For final PDF and eBook build, remove cover image and footers

Markdown/bookdown reminders

Hint: View syntax in the raw file on GitHub: <https://github.com/ontheline/otl-book>

Use brackets and parentheses for an embedded link

Use parentheses only for a non-embedded link (<http://example.com>)

Similarly, display URL with angle brackets: <http://example.com>

If necessary, use HTML to create link that opens in a new page

For cross-reference links, refer to default ID name of chapter or section header: `## Contributors = #contributors` `## A Longer Header = #a-longer-header`

To simplify longer chapter titles, add short hashtag in curly brackets as ID: `# Defining City and Suburban Lines {#defining}`

Embed a cross-reference link to chapter or section header, with brackets and parenthesis:

by Jack Dougherty

OR

see Chapter One: Defining City and Suburban Lines

Hide numbers from appearing in section headers with curly brackets around hyphen:

‘## Outline of the Book {-}‘

For an em-dash, use three hyphens—like this—rather than two hyphens.

Block quote:

“I thoroughly disapprove of duels. If a man should challenge me, I would take him kindly and forgivingly by the hand and lead him to a quiet place and kill him.”

— Mark Twain

A text-only footnote.¹

BibText footnote with semi-colons to separate cites:²

Markdown caret-footnote, which can accept multiple references with complex punctuation.³

Subheadings need four hashtags and no-number symbol

Using three hashtags makes the subheader appear in the TOC because I have not found way to control `toc_depth` in web output. Use the no-number symbol to prevent automatic number of subheaders.

Insert image using Markdown syntax:

** Use 5 hashtags for digital image headers **, and imperative verbs to hint interactive use

8.1.0.0.1 Explore the Chart: embedded HTML iframe

Write caption immediately afterwards in body text.

8.1.0.0.2 Scroll the map: embedded HTML iframe

Scroll down the narrative (or click and use arrow keys) to see how Hartford County, Connecticut divided into 29 separate towns from the early 1600s to the late 1800s. Boundaries shown here are not exact, but approximated from the best available digital sources: UConn Libraries MAGIC historical maps, Atlas of Historical County Boundaries at Newberry Library, and the Connecticut State Register and Manual. See sources, known issues, and the code by Ilyana Ilyankou and Jack Dougherty, Trinity College at <https://github.com/ontheline/otl-town-borders/>. Insert short refs/links and footnotes in caption when possible.

8.1.0.0.3 Play YouTube video: embedded HTML iframe from secure https

Write caption immediately afterwards in body text.

¹This is a footnote, with no reference

²Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Tyack, *The One Best System*.

³On this theme, see Jack Dougherty, “Review of ‘Connecticut’s Public Schools: A History, 1650-2000’ by Christopher Collier,” *Connecticut History* 50, no. 1 (2011): 120–22, http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cssp_papers/41. On a different theme, see Jack Dougherty et al., “School Choice in Suburbia: Test Scores, Race, and Housing Markets,” *American Journal of Education* 115, no. 4 (August 2009): 523–48, http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cssp_papers/1, pp. 33–35

⁵Dougherty et al.



Figure 8.1: Using markdown: auto-number does not appear in web, but appears in pdf, text *with italics*, no center-alignment on web, but centered in PDF, with source link, with caret-footnote.⁵



Figure 8.2: Using R code: auto-number appears in web and pdf, centered, resized at 90 percent, but not sure how to format footnotes or italics

8.1.0.0.4 Consider using more complex R codes for final PDF production

Image inserted with R code:

Insert URL with R code:

To do: learn more about R codes <https://bookdown.org/yihui/bookdown/web-pages-and-shiny-apps.html>

8.2 Video Test

by Jack Dougherty

Play YouTube video: embedded HTML iframe from secure https

Write caption immediately afterwards in body text.

Play CTDA video: embedded HTML iframe from non-secure http

Write caption immediately afterwards in body text.

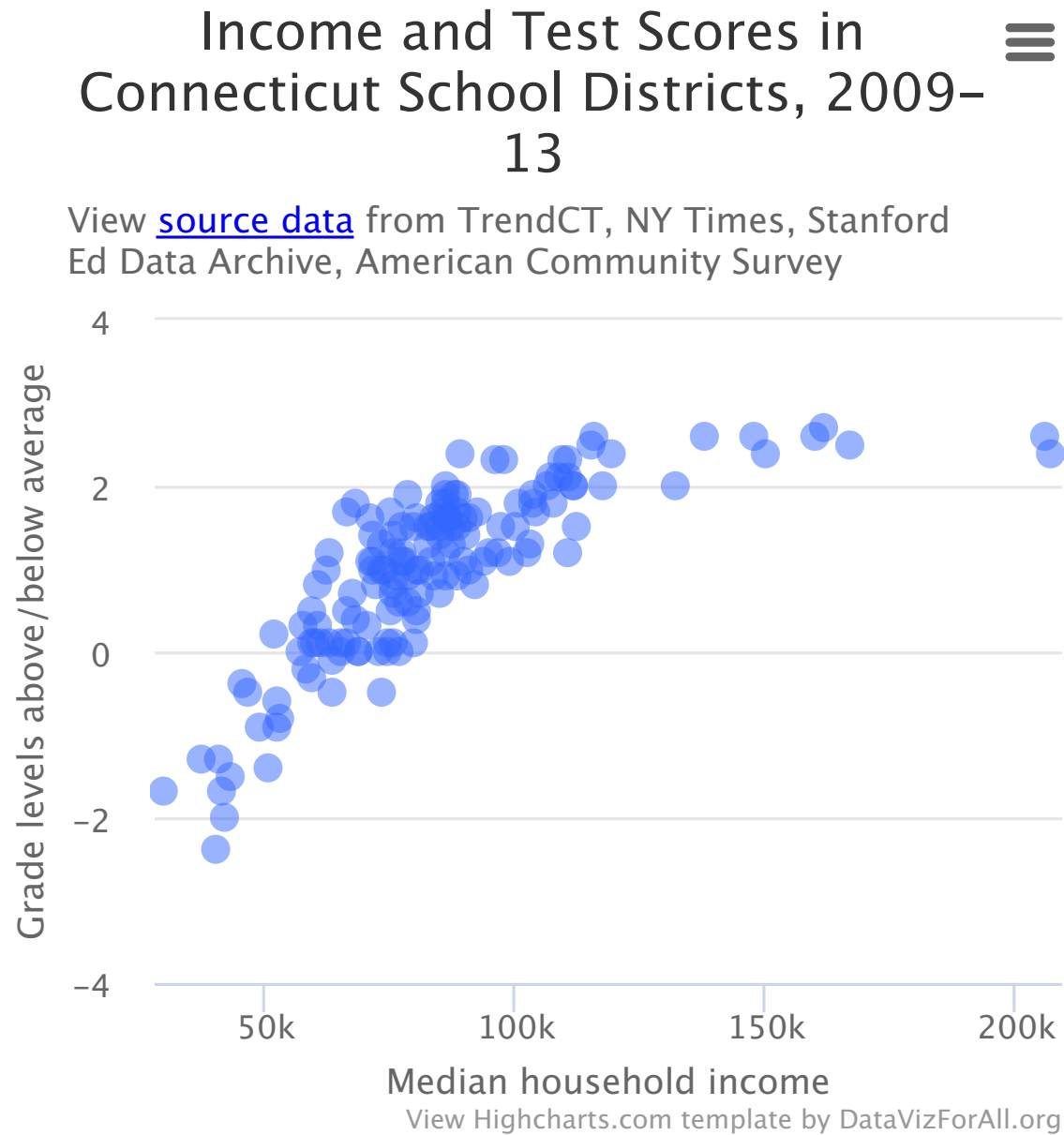


Figure 8.3: URL inserted using R code: centered, resized at 90 percent, not sure how to format footnotes or italics

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Chapter 9

Teaching with On The Line

TO COME

Chapter 10

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