historians such as Robert Self and Laura Kalman have written about this topic at the national level, and historians such as Lisa McGirr, Matthew Lassiter, and Kevin Kruse have examined it in the context of the sun belt, Taranto makes a compelling argument that New York offers a new, important perspective on this phenomenon.

Religion and race are at the core New York’s significance. Focusing on white, mostly Catholic, married mothers in New York suburbs is a welcome corrective to the version of this story largely focused on evangelical Protestants’ role in reshaping conservatism and the Republican party. And shifting attention away from the well-documented role of the southern strategy in reshaping the Republican party, Taranto makes clear how race shaped the experiences and identities of women activists in suburban Long Island and Westchester County. “The women often assumed that their own merit and ability to ascend the socioeconomic ladder had led their families to the suburbs,” Taranto writes (p. 29). “They failed to understand or acknowledge the link between social mobility and racially coded politics and structural inequalities” (ibid.).

Taranto considers with empathy and insight the ways that this group of women felt about and responded to the changes in their world. Explaining how these women’s subjective feelings of being disrespected became mobilized into a grassroots movement that shaped the realignment of political parties seems particularly important today.

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The Fight for Local Control: Schools, Suburbs, and American Democracy. By Campbell F. Scribner. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016. xii, 239 pp. $35.00.)

What happens when historians think about U.S. suburbs not as the product of growth outward from a city but as encroachment on the rural landscape? Campbell F. Scribner’s The Fight for Local Control takes this approach to reconceptualize the history of education in twentieth-century U.S. suburbs. Many valuable accounts of suburban politics focus on how bedroom-community dwellers built mutual alliances, often to defend racial and class-based exclusionary policies. Scribner recognizes this pattern but focuses instead on the encounter between white rural agricultural communities and their traditions of educational governance and financing, on the one hand, and new suburban and exurban residents and new educational ideas circulating nationally, on the other. Established and newly arrived inhabitants on the suburban fringe, Scribner argues, found common ground around the oft-contested idea of “local control” of public education.

The practice of school consolidation—in which state governments pressed to combine small schools or districts into larger units—drew decades of rural resistance, informed by a deep sense of local attachment to community schools. As suburbanization accelerated in the post–World War II years, the mix of established and newly arrived local voters had to decide whether to fund a new facility or tolerate an aged one, and whether to seek higher-qualified and better-paid teachers. Raising taxes to support schooling could yield a property value appreciation enjoyed by those who slept in the exurbs. For those who worked the land, though, the same increases in value could threaten economic survival. Across disparate positions, new and established residents came to agree that they, rather than state or federal education officials, should make choices about school funding, curriculum, and the role of professional educators. Scribner explains that “rural traditions of community control seeped into suburban politics” as localities debated desegregation and teacher unionization (p. 58). By the late twentieth century, however, new debates—over school funding and increasingly national curricular trends—revealed fissures in rural and suburban commitment to local control. Property tax caps, for example, proved suburban voters were willing to limit local control in return for lower tax burdens.

The Fight for Local Control draws most intensively on examples from Wisconsin, with additional cases from the upper Midwest and beyond. Scribner’s account could prove useful
comparison with accounts of the Jim Crow South, where disfranchisement of black voters made “local control” a fiction, but he excludes these southern districts because they were geographically county-wide. Comparisons with urban black and Latino advocacy for community control of schools also would be fruitful. Suburban expressions of educational autonomy must also be heard against the backdrop of the many forms of state and federal subsidy on which suburban development depended.

As fundamental questions about publicly governed education are intensely debated in the United States today, Scribner makes a valuable contribution to historians’ understanding of the freighted and protean concept of “local control.”

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Fifty-one years ago, during the “long, hot summer” of 1967, civil disorders erupted in over 150 cities across the United States. One of the deadliest of the conflagrations occurred in Newark, New Jersey, where several days of rebellion and repression ensued after police officers beat an unarmed black taxi cab driver. The battle in Newark caused twenty-six deaths, nearly a thousand injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage.

Ever since, scholars have grappled with the causes and consequences of America’s “urban crisis,” a slow rolling structural calamity rooted in decades of job losses, disinvestment, depopulation, and racial inequality. In recent years, however, historians have begun to move beyond the familiar theme of decline by focusing on the persistence of urban dwellers.

Julia Rabig’s The Fixers fits squarely within this still-emerging tradition. Throughout, her focus is on “the fixers”—the city dwellers and suburbanites who fought for a brighter future for Newark before, during, and long after the urban uprisings of the 1960s. In Rabig’s telling, the fixers were a diverse array of individuals and organizations, including the African American activists who worked to elect the city’s first black mayor, Kenneth Allen Gibson, in 1970; the impoverished tenants who waged a lengthy rent strike to improve public housing; the workers who picketed construction sites in support of affirmative action; the black nationalists who envisioned new housing and community centers; and the dissident Catholic priests who labored alongside black women to provide affordable housing.

Pragmatists at heart, the fixers were committed to improving the city through a combination of protest and negotiation. Fixers such as Gustav Heningburg of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition—a man who felt equally comfortable at demonstrations and inside corporate boardrooms—occupied liminal spaces within the world of Newark politics, often mediating disputes between protesters, government officials, and business leaders.

Rabig’s work upends much of the conventional wisdom about Newark and other struggling cities by showing in convincing detail how fixers were able to win significant reforms, even amid broader structural crises. In 1968, for instance, Heningburg and others negotiated with urban renewal officials over the construction of a medical and dental college, ultimately winning concessions that granted new education and employment opportunities to local residents. Likewise, as the federal government retreated from the War on Poverty in the late 1960s and 1970s, fixer-led community development corporations such as the New Community Corporation helped fill the void by building and managing low-income housing complexes and day care centers. Although such endeavors failed to remedy Newark’s entrenched patterns of inequality, the efforts of the fixers highlight the creativity and resilience that have often been hallmarks of urban reformers.

The Fixers is an outstanding work of academic history. It is a deeply researched and persuasively argued monograph that makes a significant contribution to the literature on the civil rights and black power movements, the privatization of municipal government and