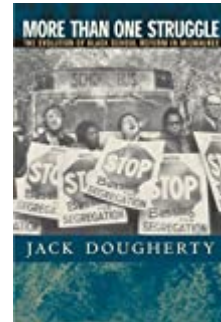
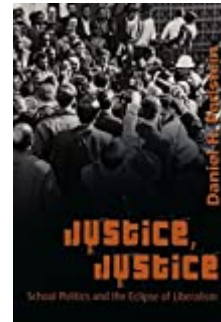


Jack Dougherty. *More Than One Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform in Milwaukee.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. x + 247 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-5524-9.



Daniel H. Perlstein. *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism.* New York: Peter Lang, 2004. x + 209 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8204-6787-0.



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Declension, Evolution, and School Reform in the Northern Civil Rights Movement

Jack Dougherty's local history of the African-American freedom movement in Milwaukee and Daniel H. Perlstein's case study of New York City's community control movement are timely contributions to an emergent and vibrant sub-field within social movement history: the northern civil rights movement.[1] Through life stories of educational activists, Perlstein and Dougherty trace the political, ideological, and strategic differences within urban coalitions for educational reform over time. Despite these similarities, the authors' interpretations diverge at a critical juncture, mirroring a similar divide in

1960s historiography.

Perlstein's analytical and temporal approach is consistent with a number of well-known historical studies of the rise and fall of local civil rights movements in the North, set against the decline of liberalism in the 1970s. Generally bound by the *Brown v. Board* decision of 1954 on one end and a 1970s white, working-class backlash on the other, such history suggests that the decline of the movement was abrupt and almost inevitable.[2] Perlstein portrays a vibrant coalition for community control peak-

ing in the late-1960s and fading in the face of the conservatism of the 1970s. While Perlstein's analysis hesitates to ascribe causality, he nevertheless argues that by the early 1970s, racial politics in New York City were emblematic of an emerging conservative trend among white workers and seen nationally as a benchmark for urban American life (p. 9).

By contrast, Dougherty considers a broader trajectory of social movement activism for African-American educational justice, spanning the six decades from the 1930s to the 1980s. His longitudinal perspective, combined with a more evolutionary and overlapping analysis of a local civil rights movement, challenges the standard declensionist narrative and embraces the key contributions of earlier generations. *More Than One Struggle* joins a growing body of literature which portrays local civil rights movements as less static and linear than the traditional story of decline would suggest.[3] Dougherty shows that when the differences among activists appeared unbridgeable, and radicalism seemed to have faded, a continued commitment to improving educational opportunities for African-American young people imbued local activism. But Dougherty is careful to avoid the romantic tendency to portray a steady forward progression by evoking an overlapping series of evolving struggles and a process of creative adaptation (p. 202).

Despite their interpretive differences, both books cover new historical ground. In *Justice, Justice: School Politics and the Eclipse of Liberalism*, Perlstein, at first glance, seems to be treading well-worn territory, offering yet another narrative of the much-studied Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis of 1968, when a predominantly white, Jewish teachers' union, the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), confronted African-American local activists who wanted community control of their neighborhood schools. Escalating that confrontation, the union waged the longest strike in the history of New York City schools. To some historians, the school crisis provides a potent symbol of the deteriorating race relations in New York City. Yet it forms only a backdrop for Perlstein's sweeping intellectual history of the ideological differences between and among teacher unionists and community activists in the late 1960s. In retelling the convoluted events of the crisis itself, Perlstein's first chapter, "Worldviews in Collision," offers a remarkably succinct and clear summary. Briefly tracing the history of New York City's civil rights movement, from its focus on integration after the *Brown* ruling in 1954 to the collapse of the community control experiment in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and Harlem in 1968, Perlstein sets the stage for subsequent

chapters. Evenly divided between black and white protagonists, four chapters cover the life stories and intellectual history of radical white activists and the union leadership they opposed, while four cover a diverse range of black activists and educators.

The lives of three African-American community organizers—Milton Galamison, Bayard Rustin, and Sonny Carson—are complemented by profiles of three African-American educators—Albert Vann, Rhody McCoy, and Keith Baird. Their stories evoke the subtle and not-so-subtle differences within the various factions and organizations that comprised the community control movement. As one example, Milton Galamison, a Presbyterian minister, led the largest boycott of schools in the country in 1964, when almost half of New York City's one million students protested their school system's failure to integrate. Although a number of accounts define Galamison as a staunch integrationist, Perlstein shows that he, like community activists, continued to hold onto an integrationist ideal while organizing on multiple fronts, including advocating for community control of segregated schools. Perlstein also examines the lives of white teachers, women and men, who joined Teachers for Community Control (TCC), tracing the roots of their militant anti-racism to the communist-inspired Teachers Union, active in black schools and communities in the 1930s and 1940s. Perlstein describes how white teachers such as Paul Becker, Zippy Bauman, Ann Filardo, and Bob Greenberg struggled to support black activism while maintaining a pro-labor stance, crossing UFT picket lines during the strike but later creating an oppositional caucus within the UFT. These life stories are an important contribution to the historiography of New York City's black radical tradition and its intersection with Communist thought and organizing.[4] However, still missing from this history is how the Puerto Rican migration of the 1950s introduced yet another organizing tradition to New York City.

Unfortunately, rather than rupturing the commonplace black/white binary of the community control struggle, Perlstein reinforces it. He argues that despite New York's significant Chinese, Puerto Rican, and Dominican population, few activists from these communities played significant roles in 1968 (p. 164). One notable figure who dispels Perlstein's claim was Evelina Lopez Antonetty, a parent of children attending schools in the South Bronx who became one of the most effective community organizers in New York City. Antonetty founded the United Bronx Parents in 1965, a community organization that focused on schools, housing, and employment. This is just

one of a number of unexplored life stories that counter standard black/white interpretations of the community control movement, while also reversing a predominantly male orientation. Such history provides a foundation for understanding the increasing involvement of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Asians, and women in movements for social justice in the 1970s.

Such oversights do not, however, overshadow Perlstein's most important break with the historiography of this fractious era in New York City's civil rights history. Perlstein assiduously tackles and fractures the dominant interpretation of the rise of black anti-Semitism during the schools crisis of 1968. In chapter 3, "The Ambiguities of Identity: Whiteness, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Schooling," Perlstein re-interprets Jewish charges of black anti-Semitism, a controversial and emotional topic that continues to haunt not only the historiography, but the collective memories of participants on both sides. Perlstein highlights studies by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) at the time, which showed that militant blacks were less anti-Semitic than non-Jewish whites. At the same time, according to Perlstein, the level of anti-Semitism among blacks—despite the occasional rhetoric—did not increase as a result of the teachers strike. What changed instead was the Jewish response.

Perlstein portrays a range of political and religious values within the Jewish community and shows how, by the end of the teachers' strike, such differences did not matter. Albert Shanker, the president of the UFT, positioned black anti-Semitism at the heart of the school strike by tapping into already-existing fears and galvanizing citywide Jewish opposition to community control. Perlstein situates Shanker's skillful manipulation of Jewish political differences within the broader context of identity-formation, arguing that precisely because political values continue to be unsettled and contested among Jews, charges of black anti-Semitism have continued to serve as a vehicle through which Jews consider their identity and their situation in white America (p. 47). This is a far more complex treatment of black anti-Semitism than most of the voluminous scholarship on the topic.^[5] Perlstein has turned the traditional argument on its head, contending that one of the major causes for the heightened level of controversy over community control was not an increasing level of black anti-Semitism, but Jewish response to community control demands. His work may not change the collective memory of many pro-union supporters, but hopefully it will provoke future re-examinations of Shanker's rise to power.

In *More Than One Struggle*, Dougherty moves beyond the post-1954 period by studying three different generations of black educational activists and how they defined the meaning of race and schooling in Milwaukee on their own terms. From life histories of both elite and everyday African-American activists, male and female, Dougherty follows the trajectory of the movement through three key transitional periods. Beginning with the fight for black teachers in the 1930s and 1940s, Dougherty moves to the integration protests of the 1960s, and concludes with a stand-off between the forces of community control and integration in the 1970s and 1980s. Throughout, he provides a multi-layered account of the differences across and within generations of activists. He also demonstrates how each generation's gains and losses had serious consequences for those who followed.

Through his multi-generational lens, Dougherty asserts that education activists in the 1930s and 1940s—whom activists in the 1960s considered too cautious and moderate—were responsible for creating the conditions for the development of subsequent civil rights struggles. Thus, the first generation's focus on hiring African-American teachers informed the next wave of protest for integrated schools. Similarly, the mass movements against segregation in the 1960s shaped ensuing demands in the 1970s and '80s for more extensive integration policies, and, at the same time, counter demands for community control of schools. Dougherty's clever use of *Brown* as a touchstone to connect four prominent educational reformers from different eras helps re-historicize the decision in a broader context. Those reformers and the coalitions they built—William Kelley of the Milwaukee Urban League in the 1930s and 1940s, Lloyd Barbee of the NAACP in the 1960s, and Marian McEvilly and Howard Fuller who respectively spearheaded school integration and community control implementation plans in the 1970s and 1980s—anchor the Milwaukee story. Dougherty conducted sixty oral history interviews of education activists, enabling him to provide a rich portrayal of these critical leaders as well as the grassroots participants who were critical to the effectiveness of the Milwaukee African-American freedom movement.

Dougherty's long view of the movement, anchored by in-depth analyses of key transitions within it, challenges the typical master-narrative of the national civil rights movement, one that traces a linear progression from integration to Black Power. He argues convincingly that in Milwaukee demands for integration continued to echo in the 1970s and the 1980s in some neighborhoods undergoing racial transition (from white to black) even as

activists in predominantly black neighborhoods pursued community control. By considering the role of geography and class in the politics of race and schooling in Milwaukee, Dougherty complicates the more simplistic interpretations of the move from integration to community control in northern urban school districts. His effective use of old movement photographs, and explanatory maps and graphs strengthens this argument.

Dougherty contextualizes his local study within the broader trends of the national civil rights movement and the evolution of movements in other northern cities. Yet, throughout the narrative, he avoids using the *Brown* decision as a retrospective template to measure local activism in Milwaukee, a medium-sized school district undergoing significant racial transitions. His conclusion, "Re-thinking History and Policy in the Post-Brown Era," makes a timely contribution to recent interdisciplinary re-examinations of the legacy of *Brown*. [6] Dougherty is critical of a number of historical interpretations of *Brown* that fail to acknowledge how changing historical contexts shaped the dynamic responses of black reform movements. Local studies, he contends, illustrate how school reform movements varied from place to place and even within one location, evolving across generations. Such studies, he argues, may also spark a greater historical imagination on the part of policymakers.

While I agree with Dougherty's urge to link policy and history, I believe that local studies need to take a deeper look at failures and successes in the implementation of social movement demands—at the district, school, and community level. Dougherty does not attempt this. He focuses on the evolution of the movement itself, the depth of its activism, the reach across generations, and the richness of public debate and engagement. Dougherty states in his introduction that any consideration of how civil rights demands affected individual schools and classrooms will be left to future historians. This does not diminish his contribution; it only limits the use of such history in the policy arena.

Close studies of institutional change can illuminate the historical trajectories of social movements directed at reforming educational policy and, ultimately, practice. Historians have a particular contribution to make in this area, and Dougherty's focus on individual historical actors offers a useful perspective on institutional change over time. For example, both McEllivry and Fuller crossed the insider/outsider boundaries separating the movement from its institutional realization. Both moved from their long-term roles as outside agitators to assume positions within the school system—McEllivry as a school

board member and Howard as superintendent. The trade-offs entailed in each offer a glimpse of the challenges facing activists-turned-administrators or elected officials as well as the process of implementation itself. Still, Dougherty makes a convincing argument for why historical studies can be useful to current debates about education policy. In his conclusion, he argues that the lessons from Milwaukee's past suggest that we need to maintain equal amounts of hope and healthy skepticism for every reform effort (p. 202). These two books, read in tandem, certainly substantiate his admonishment. Perhaps a narrative mix of evolution and declension will yield the right balance of hope and skepticism about the past and future of reform in urban education.

Notes

[1]. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); and Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

[2]. Jonathan Rieder, *The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985); and Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston against Busing: Race, Class and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

[3]. In addition to the works by Theoharis and Woodard, see Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[4]. Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[5]. Jerald Podair, *The Strike That Changed New York: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[6]. Derrick A. Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Charles J. Ogletree, *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half-Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004); and James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). In his last chapter, Dougherty poses an alternative interpretation to that of Patterson.

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