1 School Reform in Two American Cities

In an era when students, teachers and principals are being held responsible for upgrading their performance, the schools desperately need someone at the top who is responsible to the electorate for the performance of the entire system. That person should be the mayor.
"Mayoral Control" 2000

I'm really quite pessimistic that the mayor will be able to address the underlying fundamental problem, which is how to improve the test scores and the educational capacities of low-income minority children.
Paul Peterson, Harvard University, in Stanfield 1997

Since the 1983 publication of the federal report *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983), improving the nation's system of urban education remains at the top of the public agenda. The quest for solutions to America's ailing public schools has attracted the attention of parents, politicians, and business leaders as well as scholars and policy analysts (see Gittell 1998; Stone 1996, 1998; Bryk et al. 1998; A. G. Hess 1991, 1995; Katznelson and Weir 1985). The public has traditionally blamed school boards for failing public school systems. Boards have been criticized as financially undisciplined, corrupt, unresponsive, and unaccountable to the communities they serve and to the government. Altering the governance structure of urban schools has gained momentum across the country as a method of reversing some of the alarming trends in urban education. The increasing popularity of this trend raises the question of whether changes to the governance structure of urban schools will improve educational opportunities for the largely minority students who rely on these schools for their educational and economic futures.

There are numerous reforms aimed at improving public education currently under way in American cities. Philadelphia, for

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example, has turned over management of twenty schools to the private company Edison Schools. Milwaukee led the trend in the use of publicly funded educational vouchers for private and parochial schools. Some states have taken over the administration of local school systems. Other school districts are tinkering with decentralized control of the schools. Still other cities have focused on strong local centralization, believing such a structure is the key to improving student performance. In these cities, independent school boards are eliminated and replaced with mayor-appointed boards, typically without any legislative checks by the city council.

This new model of school governance is the focus of this book. Not surprisingly, mayoral control of the schools has ignited controversy. Advocates of mayoral control contend that mayors are able to centralize public school services, making schools more cost-effective. In fact, many of the cities with mayors at the top of the educational hierarchy have achieved balanced school budgets, a feat previously considered unobtainable for big cities with growing populations of poor people and decomposing fiscal structures. Advocates also contend that, because democratically elected mayors are accountable to the entire city, the use of mayor-appointed boards eliminates the petty politics often associated with elected boards (Henig and Rich 2004; Kirst 2002).

In contrast, critics argue that appointed boards take power away from poor, working class, and predominantly minority residents who rely on the public schools. Some critics also argue that although some mayors may make wise appointments, others facing the multiple pressures and challenges of urban governance may not. In addition, because urban schools serve a low-income, majority-minority population, critics argue that when school boards are under mayoral control, those with the least power are further distanced from influencing the policies that have an impact on the educational opportunities of their children (Stone 2004).

We face many crises in American urban education, but one of the most serious is the underlying tension between two potentially competing values: participatory democracy versus higher measurable student achievement. On the one hand, America has historically valued public schooling as a method of cultivating democratic citizenship. On the other hand, as demonstrated in the report *A Nation*

at Risk, in recent decades America has placed increasing pressure on public schools to raise standardized test scores in the name of international economic competition. This tension most directly affects racial minorities, who have become the numerical majority in many urban areas. After decades of educational neglect, African American and Latino citizens have mobilized to achieve both of these goals: gaining a greater voice in urban politics and reducing the racial "achievement gap" in student performance.

The twin goals of participatory democracy and higher student achievement matter a great deal to all Americans. But, how should we respond if we discover that an urban school reform favors one of these goals over the other? This book examines the shift toward centralized mayoral control of big-city school systems in Chicago and Cleveland and considers its consequences for these competing American values. This study reveals that the centralization of urban school governance reduces minority participation in democratic politics, even when the mayor is Black. At the same time, preliminary evidence suggests that minority students' standardized test scores may increase under mayoral control. If the evidence continues to pull us in different directions, then how should we respond? How do we evaluate an urban school reform that exacerbates the tension between the competing values of participatory democracy and higher student achievement? These questions are addressed in the final chapter of the book.

The problem of sustaining the promise of public education for poor and minority communities is one confronting all big American cities. In my investigation of the politics of urban school reform, I chose to focus on two cities: Chicago and Cleveland. Like other urban school systems, the public school systems in these cities have experienced numerous problems caused by fiscal difficulties, deteriorating physical facilities, low student achievement, and administrative mismanagement. Low public confidence in the school board led Mayors Richard M. Daley of Chicago and Michael White of Cleveland to execute takeovers of their school boards to establish direct accountability to the city government. Chicago led the pattern of mayoral control of school systems when, in 1995, the Illinois state legislature granted Mayor Daley control of the Chicago schools. Following Chicago's reform in 1995, the Ohio state

legislature gave Mayor White control of the Cleveland schools. Unlike mayoral control in Chicago, Cleveland's model followed a brief period of state control of the schools and management by a school board that was elected by the people. On gaining control of the school system, Cleveland's mayor replaced the elected school board with an appointed one in 1998. An important component of Cleveland's model of mayoral control is that an occupationally and socially diverse nominating committee plays a central role in selecting board members. In 2002, Cleveland voters were given the option of maintaining or rejecting mayoral control. The Illinois legislature included no such measure for Chicago residents. In both cities, the reforms gave the mayors broad oversight of school district finances as well as the ability to hire (and fire) the board's chief executive officer or superintendent.

The reforms undertaken in Chicago and Cleveland raise three important questions. The first relates to whether mayoral control has improved urban education. Has student achievement improved under mayoral control of the schools? We live in an era in which test scores, despite the controversies surrounding them, are emphasized as the primary measure of student achievement; and these scores have become an important political matter. Understanding the effects on student performance of the mayoral control governance structure is a timely issue.

To some, centralizing control of school bureaucracies holds the promise of turning around troubled school systems. Essentially, placing mayors at the top of the educational hierarchy holds the promise of creating more consistency, stability, and efficiency for the school system. On the other hand, some analysts believe that the financial crises faced by cities are the overwhelming factor behind the failure of urban school systems. Altering the governance structure of the schools, therefore, would not in and of itself necessarily remedy the immediate crises that affect urban public school students. Many of the problems associated with urban education are rooted in social, political, and economic inequalities that extend beyond the educational realm (Stone 2004). Residential segregation and the fact that urban schools rely on a declining tax base are contributing factors to the problems faced by urban schools. When examining urban school reform, we must ask whether a particular reform has actually

targeted the root causes of the urban education crisis, or whether it has merely addressed the symptoms of the problem.

A second question is whether racial minorities in urban school systems have gained or lost power from the centralization of power in the hands of mayors. Current school reform efforts are pursued during an era when minority groups have won considerable influence in big-city governments. Scholars have demonstrated that Black and Latino political mobilization during the late 1960s and 1970s led to greater minority office holding and ultimately increased governmental responsiveness to the minority community's needs (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984, 1997; Button 1989; Karnig and Welch 1980). As Wilbur Rich (1996) demonstrated, Black activism in many rust-belt cities during the 1960s and 1970s resulted not only in more minority representation in municipal governments, but also in minority administrative control of school boards and educational policy by the 1980s.

The fact that minority groups play a more critical role in governing cities appears to have complicated the analysis of school reform efforts. In cities such as Baltimore, as documented by Marion Orr (1999), minority control of the school bureaucracy coincided with a declining economy, White flight to the suburbs, and reduction in federal aid to cities. Because of the reciprocal relationship among economic crises, politics, and public education in postindustrial cities, performance improvements among students have not been evident. This is not to say that the symbolic implications of minority incorporation in educational decision making are inconsequential. Rather, as minorities gained increased influence, their efforts to improve schools were hampered by the political and economic realities of urban America.

Alongside these two empirical questions stands a third and broader policy question: What should we do if the dual values of minority incorporation and rising student achievement pull us in different directions? There are obvious moral reasons for caring that minorities have a voice in policymaking. At the extreme, exclusion of the people served by the schools from the decision making that affects their children seems unfair. Beyond this, there is a broader political and social reason. Even when benevolent Whites dominate educational policy decision making, excluding minorities' voices and

personal expertise with the schools places students at a disadvantage. Because minorities are at the heart of urban education, excluding them means that the people with the deepest understanding of the local schools are silenced. Even if community members are under-educated, their firsthand experiences with the schools offers valuable input on the experiences of their children in the schools. This is input that can help the schools more effectively teach children in homes and communities that face multiple social and economic challenges.

Therefore, even if we see some evidence of improvements in student performance after a school reform is implemented, ignoring the level of minority incorporation in the policy process misses a component of urban school reform that can also have an impact on outcomes. Furthermore, Meier and England (1984) found that Black membership on school boards leads to more equitable educational opportunities for Black students. Thus, if decisions are made at the top of the hierarchy without the inclusion of the minority residents served by the system, then educational policy may be less responsive to minority interests. I argue that minority incorporation is essential if we want to have a system in which those on the receiving end of public education have a voice in the policy process. Although improvements in student performance are important and are a measure of the overall health of the school system, if the minority community plays a limited role in the education of their children, then the system lacks an important component of urban education.

Conceptual Framework: Evaluating Urban School Reforms

In their book Politics, Markets, and America's Schools (1990), John Chubb and Terry Moe critique public education and efforts to reform it. According to the authors, public schools are democratically run, yet these very institutions of democratic control undermine school autonomy and effectiveness (23). They argue that entrenched interest groups, such as unions, school boards, superintendents, administrators, and professionals, participate in the democratic process in education and are resistant to institutional

change. From this critique, Chubb and Moe make the case for a market-based approach to public education. Attention to their work has centered primarily on their strong case for school choice. They "turn away from government" as a solution to the identified problem and support a market-based system reliant on consumer choice (Henig and Rich 2004).

There are three major political variables that Chubb and Moe largely overlook in their analysis of public education. The first and foremost omission is race. The second variable, which is very much correlated with race, is class. Third, they downplay the role of state dynamics in the distribution of resources for urban schools. All of these variables represent important arenas of conflict in urban education.

Regarding the important issues of race and class, Chubb and Moe's critique of American schools draws all of its examples of schools that fail to foster student performance improvements from urban schools. Although they mention suburban and private schools in their book, they argue that these are the schools that avoid the democracy trap to which the downfall of public education is attributed. These schools have more autonomy, and there is far less democratic competition, making them generally more successful. Chubb and Moe raise the following questions to develop their argument that too much democracy is the root of failing public (urban) schools:

> What is the relationship between democratic control and the organization of schools? Is it possible that there is something inherent in America's traditional institutions of democratic governance that systematically creates and nurtures the kinds of schools that no one really wants? (25)

Although the "schools that no one really wants" are clearly urban schools, Chubb and Moe overlook that many suburban public schools remain highly desirable, which calls into question their implication that there is something inherently flawed in the democratic control of American schools.

I argue that these questions misdiagnose the problems of urban schools. Missing from their analysis is the recognition that race or class plays a role in the politics of urban education. It is well known

that urban schools in the United States are majority-minority and serve lower-class students. To downplay these facts is to overlook a significant pattern of inequality in public education. Rather than acknowledging the race and class patterns of inequality in urban and suburban education, they simply claim that suburban schools are more autonomous and have less democratic competition among stakeholders for control over resources, making them more effective. In addition, the competition that urban schools experience, particularly for resources, is different from what we typically see in suburban schools, which have fewer minorities and more access to resources. The authors also ignore the fact that it is common to see racial and class conflicts within urban education. For example, it would not be uncommon to see minority parents and teachers at odds with majority White groups such as unions, school boards, business groups, or even local foundations over the shape of school reform.

The third arena of conflict that Chubb and Moe overlook is the role that the state plays in urban education. Although they do recommend that states play more of a role in public education in their market-driven prescription for reform (225), they do not address how state policies constrain urban schools. It is common knowledge that reliance on property taxes for education places urban schools at a disadvantage because of their typically low tax base. Together with reductions in federal spending on education, urban schools are highly dependent on state resources. However, competition for these resources is fierce. In most state governments, White suburban and rural interests typically dominate minority urban interests. In sum, racial politics inside city school districts is happening simultaneously within the political struggle for resources at the state level. These arenas of conflict are both ignored by Chubb and Moe, and I argue that these omissions lead to their misdirected criticism of democratic control of urban education.

By contrast, Marion Orr's book, *Black Social Capital* (1999), makes it abundantly clear that race and economics played a critical role in Baltimore's urban school reforms during the 1980s and 1990s. In explaining what can cause a school reform to fail or succeed, Orr argues that both racial factors and financial resources matter. Orr develops his own theoretical framework to evaluate

urban school reform in part by building on Robert Putnam's theory of social capital. According to Putnam, social capital represents the "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions," (Putnam in Orr 1999, 3). Orr argues that this definition does not capture Baltimore's experience with school reform, particularly because it does not include the challenges of working across racial lines. He explains:

> A major flaw in the social capital argument is that it does not consider the difficulty in transferring intragroup to intergroup social capital. To appreciate the importance of social capital, especially in many of America's central cities, it is necessary to consider it within the context of intergroup competition and the distrusts built up over the years of racial divisions and black subordination. (10)

To improve the social capital theory, Orr distinguishes between two new dimensions of social capital: intragroup (Black) and intergroup (Black-White). By doing so, Orr develops a model of urban school reform that places race at the center of the policy arena. Black social capital is defined as "the interpersonal and institutional forms within the African-American community" (8) that create political cohesion within that group. The second dimension, intergroup social capital, requires interracial coalitions (10), which Orr refers to as the "cross-sector formations of mutual trust and networks that bridge the black-white divide, especially at the elite level of sociopolitical organization" (8). In his Baltimore case study, Orr concludes that Black social capital is considerable, but school reform cannot succeed without forging intergroup social capital, which he finds lacking.

Orr examines the history of Baltimore to show how racial segregation and a culture of White supremacy contributed to the high level of Black social capital in the city, yet intergroup social capital remains a more challenging reality. One of the main reasons for this is that racial mistrust runs through public policy. The facts that the city's school administration is predominantly Black and that those who control the key to resources (business leaders, state legislators, foundations) are predominantly White present hurdles for intergroup social capital formation. Orr shows that, even with strong Black social capital, the fiscal realities of public education and the

racial dynamics of the policy arena complicate urban school reform. At the root of Orr's study is the idea that to understand the challenges of reforming our urban schools, we must acknowledge the challenges associated with building cooperative arrangements between groups who control different sectors of urban education.

The void in Chubb and Moe's research in terms of race and state dynamics is directly filled by Orr's work. Orr convincingly argues that race is a necessary variable in understanding urban school reform and its connections to resources in the broader political arena; Chubb and Moe largely ignore both. By contrast with those authors, Orr does not argue that too much democracy is the reason urban school reforms fail. Rather, he sees the challenges of building intergroup social capital and the fiscal dependency of urban schools as leading factors in the challenges of urban school reform.

My work builds on the conflict between the work of Chubb and Moe and that of Marion Orr. In contrast to Chubb and Moe's critique of a high degree of democratic control of the schools, I examine the possibility that democratic incorporation in educational policy, particularly of the minority community, is critical to a successful school system. I argue that democratic participation can empower minorities and make public education more effective. I also find great merit in Orr's argument for the importance of Black and Black-White social capital in urban school reform. His argument is persuasive that without resources, which are often controlled by Whites, urban school reform may be an elusive goal.

However, although Orr examines a series of school reforms in one urban system, my study takes a different approach. I examine changes in the governance structures of two urban school systems: Chicago and Cleveland (During the period of study, Chicago's mayor was White, and Cleveland's was Black). The other divergence from Orr's research is that my work emphasizes the evaluation of student achievement outcomes as a key political variable in urban school debates, something Orr's study did not fully consider. This type of examination is timely as there is an increasing emphasis on evaluation tools such as test scores to measure the success of a school system.[1] In the end, my study confronts the important question of how the twin goals of participatory democracy and student achievement are affected by mayoral control of the schools in Chicago

and Cleveland. I argue that even with improvements in student performance, we cannot overlook the importance of minority incorporation in urban education if we hope to have successful urban schools.

A Tale of Two Cities: Chicago and Cleveland

This book systematically examines school reform in two U.S. cities: Chicago and Cleveland. These cities were selected because each has been in the forefront of the trend in mayoral control and because, like many other cities, they serve a majority-minority population. Because I am interested in understanding the structural changes in school boards in these cities, I examine school governance structures from 1965 through 2002. I selected this period because it was one of growing influence of minorities in urban governments and urban educational policy (W. C. Rich 1996).

Although the total Black and Latino population of Chicago and Cleveland is approximately 60 percent, the student minority percentage is higher in both cities (87 percent in Chicago and 80 percent in Cleveland). The cities differ significantly in size. Chicago is the third-largest school system in the nation; Cleveland is more typical of a midsize city. Together, they offer a model on which many large and midsize cities can reflect when considering mayoral control of their troubled schools. Although Cleveland modeled its mayoral control structure on the Chicago plan, there are differences in the details. In addition, the two cities contrast nicely on various political dimensions even though the demographics (with the exception of size) and economic profiles of the two cities are roughly similar.

Both of the mayors initially granted control were Democrats, but each came to power through different ethnic and racial coalitions. Since 1967, Cleveland's Black community has generally been able to elect mayors from its own racial group.[2] By contrast, Chicago elected its first Black mayor, Harold Washington, in 1983 in a racially divided election (Grimshaw 1992; Pinderhughes 1987). Since Washington's untimely death in 1987, Chicago's Black electorate has played a less-decisive role in mayoral elections.

Prior to the institution of mayoral control, Chicago's school board selection process involved the community, and Cleveland's

school board was directly elected. Both of these earlier models incorporated the community and were arguably more democratic than the mayoral control models. These models of school board selection provide interesting contrasts to mayoral control models.

Both cities previously experimented with other school governance reforms such as decentralization of control to parents or local schools. Chicago undertook a major effort to decentralize control from the central school administration to local schools and community members in 1988. This legislation included provisions by which parents essentially managed each public school. But, in 1995, the Illinois legislature reversed course by centralizing control of Chicago's schools to the mayor, and the decision-making authority of parents was significantly reduced. The Cleveland schools experimented with limited decentralization in the 1990s and had a stint under state receivership, a form of school governance reform to which state governments have increasingly resorted. In contrast to Chicago, Cleveland's elected school board was stripped of power in 1998, when the state took control of the schools. However, just three years later, the state turned control of the schools over to the mayor, much to the frustration of many parents, the teachers' union, and the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). One of the most common arguments against mayoral control of schools in Cleveland was that it stripped residents of their right to a democratically elected school board. Although supporters of these various governance reforms claim that there are benefits to each plan, a thorough evaluation of governance reform is necessary to determine whether these governance changes actually improved the educational and economic opportunities for the students served and the degree to which the community is incorporated in educational policymaking.

Although this study discusses state control of the Cleveland schools and decentralization in Cleveland and Chicago, primary emphasis is placed on mayoral control of the schools as a method of governance reform. This reform is gaining popularity nationwide, and it is crucial to understand its impact. The effects of recentralizing educational power must be examined if we hope to understand the impact of mayoral control of the schools on community inclusion in educational policy and overall student improvement.

Methodology

To determine the impact of mayoral control on urban education, I examine the impact of this reform on both minority incorporation and student achievement. Two variables assess minority incorporation: school system responsiveness to minority concerns and administrators' perceptions of their accountability when making educational policy decisions. Looking at minority incorporation through these two variables allows assessment of community satisfaction with mayoral control and examination of the other end of the spectrum, the extent to which administrators believe they are accountable to the community they serve. Together, these variables provide a clearer lens than either variable alone.

To evaluate student achievement under mayoral control, I draw on various measures of student performance, including test scores, attendance rates, and graduation figures. These measurements provide a more comprehensive evaluation of student achievement than just examining test scores.

Together, measurement of responsiveness, accountability, and student performance by these variables allows systematic evaluation of the changes in school governance structures, specifically the manner in which school board members are selected and the level of parental involvement in educational policy decisions. For both cities, I describe the details of their respective mayoral control governance structures, including how school board members are chosen and whether the mayor has complete autonomy in the appointment process. Differences in the details of the governance structure could influence outcomes; thus, it is important to examine them carefully.

A unique component of this study is the use of in-depth interviews conducted with non-elites and elites in Chicago and Cleveland between 1998 and 2002. During my research visits to Chicago between 1998 and 1999, I conducted forty-six formal in-depth interviews.[3] I began with an initial list of possible respondents supplied by scholars with expertise on Chicago politics.[4] As the interviews progressed, I added names to the list based on suggestions I received from the interviewees. This research methodology allowed conducting interviews with a broad range of community activists, parents, elected and appointed officials, school board members, school administrators,

and academicians in Chicago. I used the same strategy in Cleveland.[5] Between 2000 and 2002, I conducted thirty-seven in-depth interviews with Cleveland community activists, parents, elected and appointed officials, school board members, school administrators, and academicians.[6]

Interviews in both cities were recorded unless the respondent objected. In those cases, I took detailed notes during the interview. Interviews generally lasted between one and three hours. Several shorter interviews were also conducted by telephone and either recorded or summarized through written notes. Direct quotations appear and are used to strengthen my analysis by allowing the voices of those active in the struggle to improve urban education to be heard directly. As I promised my subjects, I use pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of the respondents. Names are attributed to the quotations of prominent administrators or elected officials only when identification is required to understand the context of their comments and when doing so did not violate my promise of anonymity. My research methodology also included an extensive examination of special reports, books, and newspaper articles. I engaged in participant observation during my visits to the two cities. I attended school board meetings, community organizational meetings, and other events to which my respondents were kind enough to invite me.

Importance of Studying Urban School Reform

As a political scientist, my interests are rooted in the minority empowerment literature (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984, 1997; Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Eisinger 1982). Although this body of research emphasizes mayors and city councils as the principal policy actors, I explore the school board as a third important policy actor in cities. Further, this study attempts to bridge the gap between the educational policy literature and the minority empowerment literature. Although several notable contributions have been made in this area (Henig and Rich 2004; Henig et al. 1999; Mirel 1999; Orr 1999; Portz, Stein, and Jones 1999; Portz 1996; Meier and Stewart 1991), this study offers a unique evaluation of governance reform and its impact on minorities.

Although my research is motivated by a concern over educational policy and what Kozol (1991) has correctly labeled the "savagely unequal" educational opportunities provided for our urban youth, my findings also speak to a number of important ongoing controversies in urban politics. First addressed is the long-standing and broad question of community power—Who governs urban America? (Dahl 1961; Hunter 1953)—by extending the issue to minority groups. Specifically examined is the extent minorities influence public school policy in cities. This is an important consideration in light of the school reform movement and the rapid pace by which new policies have been adopted, including citywide voucher plans or "choice" programs, as well as the new court-sanctioned retreat of urban districts from their decades-long goal of racial integration. Are minority interests represented in these reforms? Who now directs school policy? Does the reconcentration of power over urban education in the hands of the mayor expand or restrict the political influence of the poor and minorities?

Second, my research enters the debate regarding whether politics matters in urban governments. Does the governance structure of a school system affect its responsiveness to the community? Does the governance structure of a school system affect its ability to improve educational outcomes? Do school boards perform better when directed by the mayor or when the community is more directly involved in educational policymaking? To some, school board politics might seem inconsequential. However, if this is so, then why have so many mayors, most recently Michael Bloomberg of New York and Antonio Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, sought control of their city schools? Certainly, we must consider the financial condition of school districts. As scholars have demonstrated, by providing large budgets, direct employment, and public contracts, school districts are essential to urban economies (W. C. Rich 1996; Pinderhughes 1987; Peterson 1981; Herrick 1971). Both the Chicago and Cleveland public schools oversee billion-dollar budgets annually, provide thousands of jobs, and continue to sell bonds, all of which have a significant impact on the city's economic vitality.

Those who favor school boards appointed solely by mayors contend that mayoral control provides better fiscal management and more efficient services. Those who believe that political control of

school systems and city government makes little difference in the larger distribution and redistribution of political goods, including education, may be correct in a broader sense. But, it is clear that an investigation of the impact of altering the governance structure of an urban school district is necessary. We must understand whether changing the governance structure gets to the heart of the problems that relegate largely poor and minority students to a position of educational inferiority.

In the end, fixing the predicament of urban schools may be beyond the reach of school boards, superintendents, and even mayors. The large disparities in urban and suburban educational systems as measured by student test performance, dropout rates, truancy figures, and college attendance rates might necessitate a more comprehensive reform of the political economy to lift urban schools to the level of their suburban counterparts. School boards may be unfairly targeted for blame for the problems that require urban-suburban, state, and federal cooperation. In addition, although mayors seeking quick political boosts to aid in reelection may turn to mayoral control, it may not be the way to elevate urban schools.

This study of minority power amid the movement to centralize school governance may also yield important insights related to other educational governance reforms in other cities, such as vouchers, privatization, and charter schools. In particular, centralization may reduce minority influence over educational policymaking in cities where they were previously well represented. The fact that centralization has emerged as a new reform trend begs for analysis to determine its public policy implications and ultimate effect on minority students.

School reform is pursued at a time when the Great Society welfare state has been greatly discredited, resulting in a diminished federal role in urban affairs. This is most apparent when looking at the 1996 welfare reform legislation and the general trend in government devolution of federal programs to the state and local levels. The direction of these reforms is in many ways consistent with what is occurring in education: a growing reallocation of the burden of education from the state to the local level. Passing responsibility to city hall is a relatively new trend that has taken hold because of the "new breed" of mayors, who are seen as pragmatic, comfortable

with private sector cooperation, and less idealistic than many of their counterparts in the 1960s and 1970s (Henig and Rich 2004; Kirst and Buckley 2000).

Plan of the Book

Following this introductory section, Section II, The Politics of School Reform and Minority Political Empowerment, provides a brief historical overview of urban education reform and the position of minorities in educational reform. The three chapters in this section address major trends in urban education from the 1960s onward, with special emphasis on reforms that have taken place in Chicago and Cleveland.

After providing the necessary background on urban school reform in Cleveland and Chicago, Section III, Measuring Success in Education Reform, focuses on the influence of mayoral control on urban education. The three chapters in this section examine the three variables that are the focus of this study: responsiveness to the community, administrative accountability, and overall educational improvement under mayoral control in both Chicago and Cleveland.

Chapter 5 examines the extent to which school boards are responsive to different segments of the community under the different governance structures. I consider whether board members act as "delegates" for their constituents or as "trustees" who rely on their personal judgments to determine which policies are best for the school system. The social and political backgrounds of appointed and elected school board members are compared to draw conclusions about descriptive and substantive aspects of representation. The examination of responsiveness centers on whom community and minority groups look to for school change.

My approach to the study of responsiveness to minority involvement stems from Browning, Marshall, and Tabb's (1984) notion that minority group mobilization at the local level can lead to incorporation in city governance and ultimately to governmental responsiveness to minority residents' concerns. This notion of responsiveness is also influenced by Berry, Portney, and Thomson's (1993) contention that revitalizing urban democracy requires citizen participation to ensure governmental responsiveness to the preferences of citizens.

I view the involvement of the minority community in educational policymaking as an important aspect of democracy in urban America. The minority community is emphasized because the Chicago and Cleveland public schools educate a student body that is predominantly Black and Latino. Responsiveness has been operationalized in this study as the ability of the administration to meet the vocalized concerns of the community.

Chapter 6 examines whether school board members are accountable to different interests when operating under different governance structures. *Responsiveness* is defined as the set of actors and institutions to which community and minority groups look for school change. In contrast, *accountability* is assessed in terms of the individuals and groups included by board members in school policy decisions. Whom do members represent in their voting and policymaking patterns: the community, municipal politicians, interest groups, business organizations? Interviews with past and present school board members, chief executive officers, and the former mayor of Cleveland provide valuable information regarding whom policymakers consider themselves accountable when the school board is appointed solely by the mayor as compared to board appointments that involve the community and the city council or when the board is elected.

Ester Fuchs (1992) and Martin Shefter (1985) found not only that interest groups exerted more influence over policy in cities marked by weak and fragmented leadership, but also that the degree to which interest groups dominated city politics contributed to the city's fiscal instability. Boards elected or selected with a high level of community involvement may cast votes that cater to too many special interests, including teachers' unions, leading the district down the road to fiscal insolvency. For example, the high degree of decentralization in Chicago following the 1988 legislation and the election of school boards in Cleveland prior to 1998 may have involved too many access points for organized interests to exercise their influence over the school board. Furthermore, the political clout of organized interests in cities may be greater than that of minority residents, making minority involvement less important than perhaps anticipated.

Student performance under different reform initiatives is examined in Chapter 7 by assessing various measures of achievement to

evaluate whether a city's school governance structure is related to that performance. Student performance is considered first based on student test scores on citywide tests over time. In addition, the aggregate changes on these tests are compared to long-term results on the federally sponsored National Assessment of Educational Progress to determine whether scores in the cities kept pace with changes seen nationally. Although gauging changes in student performance also includes an evaluation of student attendance statistics and high school graduation rates, a content analysis of national news stories on mayoral control in these cities is also included because it provides a useful assessment of the mainstream interpretation of mayoral control and student performance since the governance shift.

The final section of the book, Resolving Tensions in Urban Education, addresses the troubling question of how we should respond when two competing values—greater minority incorporation in educational policymaking and improved student performance—pull us in different directions. When weighing their merits, democracy deserves the highest priority. Therefore, evaluations of the success of urban education should emphasize democratic participation in terms of minority incorporation as well as how well the schools are preparing future citizens for a life of inclusion in the policymaking process. In addition to resolving the tension between minority incorporation and student performance, my recommendations are intended to offer a new lens for evaluating the success of all urban education reform efforts, not just mayoral control.