

# Accountable Autonomy: Toward Empowered Deliberation in Chicago Schools and Policing

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## 1. THE EMERGENCE OF ACCOUNTABLE AUTONOMY

The city of Chicago hardly seems fertile ground for deliberative democratic institutions to take root and bear fruit. Although its history and environs have many contradictory strands—a tradition of machine politics, insular administrative bureaucracies installed in reaction to political manipulations, a vibrant tradition of neighborhood activism, extreme socioeconomic inequality typical of urban areas in the United States—none is particularly friendly to a politics of fairness and reason.<sup>1</sup>

It is altogether surprising, then, that two recent institutional reforms have remade Chicago's public school and police systems into the most formally participatory and deliberative departments of their kind in the United States. Consider the basic features of these organizations. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) consists of some 540 elementary schools and high schools. Since 1988, each of these schools has been governed by its own elected "local school council" (LSC). LSCs are elected every two years and each consists of six parents, two community representatives, two teachers, the school's principal, and an additional nonvoting student for high schools. They enjoy substantial powers and responsibilities such as

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hiring and firing principals of their schools, spending discretionary funds, and developing and implementing strategic plans for school improvement that address issues such as curriculum, instruction, physical design, and administrative operation. While individual schools thus gain wide latitude in determining their own affairs, they are by no means isolated from the larger citywide system. District offices and city headquarters at the Chicago Board of Education (CBE) support the governance and improvement efforts of individual schools by training LSC members and others in, for example, techniques of principal selection, school budgeting, curriculum design, and strategic planning. They also hold individual schools accountable for producing good educational outcomes, first by itself monitoring performance across schools and then by making the system more transparent by publicizing various dimensions of school operations such as test scores, student body demographics, funding levels, and attendance and graduation rates. Those schools that perform poorly are subject to disciplinary mechanisms such as increased scrutiny, active intervention to modify sub-par elements in a school's plan or its personnel, or complete "reconstitution" and receivership for cases of extreme failure.

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) implemented an architecturally similar reform in 1995. Disillusioned with the evident failure of classic policing strategies, the department embarked on a major reorganization designed to encourage officers to proactively identify and address sources of crime and disorder in their patrol areas. Unlike most other American cities that embraced problem-oriented policing,<sup>2</sup> however, the CPD reforms presumed that problem-solving efforts would work best with deep citizen involvement. On this view, residents often possess superior knowledge of problems in their neighborhoods and might have different priorities even when both are equally well informed. Therefore, a police-resident partnership can better identify and act upon critical problems than police acting alone. Partnerships might also be more effective because police and neighborhood residents have different capacities and resources. Finally, more than a few public safety and police-reform activists thought that bringing citizens closer to sworn officers would enable them to better monitor police activities and hold them accountable for doing their jobs.

These sentiments were institutionalized into a distinctive form of community policing that, like the LSC reforms, creates a kind of neighborhood governance over public safety measures. Now, in each of Chicago's 279 police beats, patrol officers and their sergeants meet regularly with residents to identify which public safety problems (e.g., a crack house) constitute the neighborhood's most urgent priorities, to develop strategies involving both police and civilian action to deal with those problems, to report back on the emergence of new problems and the success or failure of past strategies, and to develop new approaches when initial plans prove disappointing. Like the LSC reforms, neighborhood residents and officers do not operate autonomously from higher, more central authorities or

broader publics. Departments in the mayor's office and CPD provide training to both police and residents in the procedures and techniques of successful problem solving and also deploy community organizers to mobilize resident participation in the ongoing effort. These teams must also document their problem-solving activities and outcomes for review by managers and supervisors.<sup>3</sup>

This article attempts to understand the form, potential, and implications of these reforms for the values of empowered deliberation. It does so by casting their deep structure as one of *accountable autonomy*. Although the parts of this term may seem to be in tension, the following analysis will show that either alone is insufficient but that together they offer a deliberative institutional form that can generate fair and effective public outcomes. In Chicago LSCs and beat meetings, groups of citizens and street-level public servants (teachers, principals, and police officers) are autonomous in the sense that they set and implement, through deliberative processes, the specific ends and means toward broad public aims such as school improvement and public safety. In contrast with command-and-control arrangements under which these public servants would follow the instructions of superiors, this autonomy affords greater voice to citizen users, perhaps deploys more information in problem solving, and allows those closest to concrete public problems to innovate and utilize their ingenuity.

But Madison and many following him have warned of localism's dangers. Foremost among these are domination or capture by powerful factions or persons in small groups, the paralysis of local groups due to conflictual deadlock, and their lack of capacity and sophistication.<sup>4</sup> Circumstances of pervasive inequality and conflict, describing many Chicago neighborhoods, further compound these difficulties. These problems may well overwhelm the benefits to autonomy understood as neighborhood decentralization. The Chicago reforms, however, do not leave neighborhoods to their own devices. As mentioned, central offices of the CPS and CPD support local actors through the provision of training, resources, and various kinds of coordination. Insofar as effective action requires additional capacities, these external supports enhance local autonomy. More important, central managers also monitor the deliberative processes and performance outcomes of local groups. When they detect shortfalls in local process or performance, external intervention or sanctions sometimes follow. Thus, neighborhoods are subject to mechanisms of accountability that attempt to check the tendencies of autonomy to degenerate into license and to ensure that limited devolution advances broader public ends.

But this structure of accountable autonomy is an ideal type that the Chicago reforms quite imperfectly approximate, and the experience there falls short of the promise of empowered participatory deliberation. While some beats and school councils draw substantial citizen engagement, others elicit little. Some of these groups have coalesced into deliberative, effective, and innovative partnerships between residents and street-level bureaucrats, while others have degenerated

into conflict or inactivity. Often, centralized attempts to bolster flagging local efforts succeed admirably, but these interventions are sometimes as problematic as the situations they attempt to rectify. Throughout, both the CPD and CPS have thus far failed to effectively leverage local innovations into broader improvements through the diffusion of “best practices.” Although a few official programs and informal efforts at this kind of learning have taken place, the efforts are neither widespread nor systematic.

Nevertheless, these Chicago experiences provide opportunities to interrogate the theory, practice, and promise of “Empowered Deliberative Democracy.” Conceptually, the institutional architecture is a touchstone from which to generate an institutionally grounded account of *practical* deliberation that for the most part has been ignored in the abstractions of contemporary political theorists. Empirically, the Chicago experiments provide a rich opportunity to examine how one variant of deliberative democracy plays out under quite diverse urban conditions. Furthermore, the harsh political and socioeconomic climate in which these institutions operate throw several pitfalls of deliberative democracy into sharp relief.

Part 2 begins this exploration by describing the neighborhood foundations of accountable autonomy in the Chicago reforms. Part 3 then shows how central authorities in the CPS and CPD have partially reinvented themselves to support, monitor, and discipline decentralized deliberations to both bolster autonomy and provide accountability. Part 4 describes levels and biases of participation in the Chicago experience thus far. Part 5 uses two neighborhood-level case studies to illustrate the vulnerabilities and benefits of accountable autonomy. Part 6 concludes by reflecting upon two critical, but still very open, questions: the effectiveness of this reform strategy compared with conventional alternatives and its political stability.

## 2. PARTICIPATORY DEVOLUTION: THE KERNEL OF AUTONOMY

Far from the result of masterful design, these institutions arose haphazardly—themselves the result of fitful informal deliberations—as reformers inside city offices and activists outside of it groped toward more effective ways of organizing their police departments and schools. This process began in the late 1980s, when both agencies came under mounting criticism for their ineffectiveness and unresponsiveness. Although the CPD and CPS had suffered numerous such attacks throughout their histories without fundamental reorganization, this round of skirmishes was different. Conservative forces failed to rebuff demands for change, and consequently the agencies—although independently and through very different paths—deeply reconfigured themselves. Both moved decisively away from centralized command by devolving authority to school staffs, parents, police beat officers, and neighborhood residents.

In the Chicago schools, reform resulted from a pitched battle that pitted a diverse social movement composed of parent organizations, “good government” civic groups, educational reform activists, and a coalition of business groups against traditional school insiders such as the Chicago Teacher’s Union and the Board of Education. Two proximate events—media fallout from a blistering 1987 evaluation in which then Secretary of Education William Bennett called Chicago’s school system “the worst in the nation” and a grinding teachers’ strike that delayed the opening of classes for four weeks—crystallized long-standing sentiments against the CPS into concrete and well-supported proposals for reform. Although they varied in their particulars, most reformers blamed the large organizations that traditionally controlled the Chicago schools—the board and the union—for poor school performance. The old guard seemed beyond the pale of reform: so long as they controlled the schools, reformers thought, the system would remain among the nation’s worst.

Education reformers eventually took their battle to the Illinois Assembly in Springfield, and there won a decisive victory. Reformers, for better or worse, got almost everything they asked for when the Assembly passed the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act. The law created one LSC for each of Chicago’s schools. Eleven adult voting members sit on each of these councils (high schools elect one additional nonvoting student member): the principal of the school, two teachers, six parents, and two members from the community. Representatives, elected every two years, enjoy considerable powers. First, LSCs are responsible for hiring, firing, evaluating, and determining the job definitions of the principals of each school. Second, they approve school budgets. LSCs also develop a required document called the School Improvement Plan (SIP). SIPs are three-year, long-term plans that articulate improvement goals (attendance, graduation rates, achievement levels, school environment) and steps necessary to reach those goals for each school. The principal has primary responsibility for implementing the plan, while the council is charged with monitoring progress. Finally, reform legislation shifted control of “Chapter 1” funds, discretionary state monies allocated to schools on the basis of economic disadvantage, to the LSCs. This reform package made CPS the most decentralized and participatory urban educational system in the United States.

Through a very different path, the CPD recently adopted strikingly similar organizational reforms under its “Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy” (CAPS). At the end of the 1980s, police forces and chiefs in many U.S. cities were engaged in self-reflective doubt about whether their two traditional methods—preventative patrols that demonstrate presence through marked vehicles and rapid response to 911 calls for emergency service—could address the diverse and severe crime and disorder problems they faced.<sup>5</sup> Typically, reforms proposals fell under the broad rubric of “community policing” and called for officers to use their initiative and ingenuity to tackle particular problems of crime and disorder, and for

them to move closer, sometimes to build partnerships with, citizens whom they served. In Chicago, two extradepartmental forces supplemented these professional internal impulses and shaped the eventual course of reform.

Leaders from a sophisticated citywide public safety organization called the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS) had used their policy expertise to advance a community-centered vision of community policing. From CANS's perspective, based upon its experience as advocate, police policy analyst, watchdog, and neighborhood organizing entity, other cities had largely excluded citizens from their reforms, and so they amounted more to policing of the community than in partnership with it. CANS activists thought that citizens ought to be full partners in community policing because they could provide important local knowledge, distinctive resources, and could monitor police officers and hold them accountable. The second important force was city hall. Mayor Richard M. Daley and his staff seized on the community policing as a good government issue to demonstrate the city's innovative spirit and commitment to fighting crime. Interest from the mayor's office sped the pace force of community policing reform.

Absent the street heat and legislative pressure that drove school reform, these discussions at the intersection of professional, political, and civic interests led quietly to the formulation of a participatory variant of community policing that was piloted in five of the city's twenty-five police districts beginning in 1993 and then expanded to the entire city in 1995. Its basic outlines resemble the central features of the 1988 school devolution. Again recognizing the need to address situated issues with focused and contextualized attention, police officers were organized into some 279 neighborhood-sized "beat teams" that would, in addition to their ordinary patrol and response duties, familiarize themselves with specific neighborhoods and their idiosyncratic problems. Also presuming that neighborhood residents possessed detailed knowledge of these problems, resources for addressing them, and strong motivations to do so, the reform created channels for resident participation. Specifically, open "community beat meetings" would be held in each beat every month for the officers serving that area and its residents to jointly engage in problem identification and resolution efforts.

Thus, CPS and CPD both reorganized themselves through radically devolutionary measures that set in place three central planks of participatory local autonomy in police and school governance. First, the reforms created opportunities for ordinary citizens to *participate continuously and directly* in the micro-governance of two important institutions of urban life: schools and police. Parents and community members who desire formal authority and are willing to devote substantial energies in school governance can run for election to one of the six parent or two community seats on each school's LSC. Those with less intense interests attend and voice their views at their LSC's regular, typically monthly, meetings. The CAPS community policing program features no formal governance

councils. Instead, it requires police officers in each beat to attend open meetings, usually held monthly, with residents to engage in joint problem solving around crime and disorder. Prior to these reforms, residents relied upon attenuated, less-regular, and in all likelihood less-effective methods of influence over the decisions of these local institutions such as voting for their city council representative, contacting their offices about specific concerns and relying on the efficacy of subsequent constituent service efforts, or directly contacting police or school officials to lodge complaints or raise suggestions. These channels of sustained participation in local affairs increase citizens' and officials' knowledge of each other and allow the former to hold the latter accountable through continuous scrutiny of their priorities and actions.

Second, participation under this devolution instituted *deliberative decision procedures*. In most forms of political action, such as aldermanic elections and informal contacting, citizens express their preference over this policy or that candidate or occasionally opine a complaint. In LSC governance, for example, deliberation occurs in the process of constructing, approving, and implementing SIPs. Under the 1988 legislation, each LSC is required to periodically submit a SIP that lays out their three-year goals and plans to achieve them. Those involved—usually led by the principal but drawn from a school's staff and parental and community ranks—first develop an educational vision or mission statement for the school; analyze their present strengths and weaknesses; then construct curricular, instructional capacity, and physical plant strategies to advance their mission statement; and finally allocate staff and financial resources to implement and monitor the progress of those strategies. The outcomes of implementing these SIPs then feeds back into subsequent LSC deliberations and plan revisions.

Deliberation in community policing beat meetings is structured according to a similar problem-solving process. Police and residents begin by using a “brainstorming” process to generate a comprehensive list of crime and safety problems in their neighborhood. They then agree to focus on two or three listed items as priority issues, and then pool information and perspectives to develop analyses of these problems. From this, they construct strategies and a division of labor to implement these strategies. The success of these strategies is assessed in subsequent meetings, and groups typically try to develop additional strategies to address stubborn problems or take on new problems after resolving old ones. Again, this short feedback loop between the planning, implementation, and results assessment may increase both the practical capabilities and problem-solving success of residents and police officers in each beat.

These devolutions also establish a third element of *empowerment*: the expectation that citizens' participation and deliberation will palpably and directly affect public action and its results. Ordinary channels of political influence and public discussion are less empowered on both of these dimensions. When one participates in deliberation in the public sphere of mass media as a spectator or even as an

author, votes for a candidate to represent one's views, or serves on advisory committees, there is but a thin connection between one's views and official actions. In such processes, a citizen's views must be aggregated with those of many other voters, weakened by considering them across multiple issue spaces, filtered up through the ranks of political representation, and then once again diluted by administrative discretion as they are interpreted down the chain of bureaucratic command. The Chicago reforms increase citizen power over public affairs on at least two dimensions. First, since citizens join with "street-level" public officials such as teachers, principals, and police officers to analyze localized problems and develop plans to respond to them, citizens expect their input to directly shape official priorities and actions. Even if particular contributions are not incorporated into interim plans, they will at least have been publicly considered against other proposals and reasons.

### 3. A NEW CENTER: BUILDING CAPACITY AND IMPOSING ACCOUNTABILITY

Compared to hierarchical bureaucratic forms, these devolutions in police and school organization undoubtedly increase the scope for citizen participation and deliberation. From their inception, however, even reformers who viewed bureaucracies as hopelessly ineffective and unresponsive recognized the dangers inherent in decentralization and sought to remake central authority to mitigate them. Additional early experience with these new institutions of neighborhood governance revealed more pitfalls that in turn required further reconfiguration of these administrative centers to support their action units in the neighborhoods. Out of this insight and learning, the CPS and CPD central offices have moved away from attempting to direct operational minutia to supporting and monitoring the self-directed governance efforts of their neighborhood units. In the rubric of accountable autonomy, two of their new functions are to bolster the capacity of schools and beats to act autonomously through various supports and to hold them accountable through monitoring, sanctioning, and intervention mechanisms.

#### *Support: Training, Mobilization, and Institutional Intervention*

From the outset, advocates of police and school decentralization recognized that many citizens would find constructive engagement with professionals difficult. They therefore urged that training programs be developed and provided on a citywide basis. As it turned out, however, professionals would in both cases undergo exactly the same training as lay citizens, for the difficulties associated with exercising the power of deliberative problem solving were new to both. Since there was no body of off-the-shelf expertise or experts in deliberative local governance, training was necessarily a bootstrapping process. In CAPS, activists and officers from the police academy developed a group problem-solving method and hands-on curriculum based on their early experiences with informal commu-

nity-police partnerships. Under a \$2.9 million contract, the city hired CANS, a community-based organization, to teach this curriculum to residents and officers. CANS dispatched teams consisting of community organizers, civilian trainers, and experienced police officers to each of the city's beats.<sup>6</sup> Over the three or four months that they spent in each beat, the team would teach deliberative problem solving by leading residents and beat officers through the practical reasoning process described above. By the end of the period, residents had often learned the process by applying it themselves. In many cases, they could see progress on the real-world problem that they had selected as part of the training exercise. In the two years of the Joint Community-Police Training Project (JCPT), organizers estimate that they trained some 12,000 residents and several hundred police officers. In a move that was controversial because this effort was generally regarded as successful, the city terminated the CANS contract in 1997 in favor of conducting training and mobilization activities from within city departments.

School reformers also saw that LSC members might be initially bewildered by their new governance duties, and so developed their own series of training programs. During the first few years, groups within the CPS and nonprofit community organizations like the Chicago Association of Local School Councils and the Beverly Improvement Association provided training on an ad hoc basis to schools and LSC members who sought it out. In response to the perception that many LSCs were failing, the Illinois legislature passed a second major school reform law, this one focused on school accountability, in 1995. One of its provisions was that all new LSC members must undergo three days, or eighteen hours, of training or be removed from office. Training focused on basic school governance issues such as principal selection and contract terms, school budgeting, LSC member responsibilities, teamwork, and school improvement planning. This program resembled community policing efforts in that training was centrally coordinated by a University of Illinois group, but initially provided by experienced practitioners from community and school reform organizations as well as school system employees. Like the policing training program, the CPS brought the program in-house in 1998 by banning outside, mostly community-based, organizations from providing basic training.<sup>7</sup>

Just as the creation of opportunities for direct self-governance does not imply that citizens will possess capacities necessary to utilize them, neither does it mean that they will actually participate; some may not know, others may know but not care to join. In a second area of support, then, centralized efforts also attempted to boost awareness and participation in deliberative governance. Community policing outreach has employed both mass media and community organizing techniques. Since 1997, the city has spent \$1.6 million annually on media efforts to advertise and educate residents about CAPS and its participation opportunities.<sup>8</sup> Partially as a result of these television and radio spots, billboards, and a weekly cable television program called *Crime Watch*, approximately 79 percent of Chi-

chicago's adults knew about CAPS in 1998.<sup>9</sup> These efforts have been supplemented by timed-tested community organizing methods. First provided as part of the CANS training program, and then later managed from the mayor's office, the program has deployed between 30 and 60 community organizers that publicize beat meetings and partnership possibilities by visiting churches, neighborhood associations, and individual residences.

Rather than the continuous outreach in community policing, mobilization for local school governance has focused on LSC elections and been funded primarily through private sources rather than from city coffers. In the first year of elections, 1989, charitable foundations donated some \$750,000 to community organizations to recruit LSC candidates, but this sum dropped to \$318,000 and \$215,000 for the 1991 and 1993 elections, respectively.<sup>10</sup> In 1996, community organizations received some \$216,000 in private donations—about one-half of that sum was administered through the Chicago School Reform Board—to recruit and train LSC candidates.<sup>11</sup> Although causality is of course difficult to establish, many associate declines in both the number of LSC candidates and voter turnout (discussed below) to this loss of funding for outreach.

Presuming individual motivation, new institutional opportunities, and programmed mobilization and education efforts conspire to bring participants who generate effective governance and problem-solving strategies, successful implementation and beneficial effects will still depend upon various resources and the cooperation of other parties. A third way in which central authorities can help local units where they cannot help themselves, then, is through institutional interventions that make the external legal, political, and administrative environment more conducive to local deliberative problem solving. Here too, local experience often reveals the most urgent and fruitful subjects for centralized intervention. For example, many LSCs proposed restructuring their school day to allow more time for teachers to collaborate and plan classes. The collective bargaining agreement between the Chicago Teacher's Union and Board of Education, however, established precise work rules that prohibited local modification. In the next round of negotiations, the board performed its facilitative role by building into the collective agreement a waiver option through which schools could modify the workday if teachers there supported the alterations.

To illustrate further, consider a common dilemma faced by community policing groups: drug houses that are often the foci of street violence and other disturbances. Acting in isolation from one another, dozens of police-resident groups have converged upon a workable strategy. Residents try to persuade a landlord to clean up his property through, for example, tenant eviction, reporting criminal activity on the property to police, screening out potentially problematic would-be tenants, and maintaining or upgrading the property's condition. If a landlord responds to these entreaties, his cooperation with residents may eliminate the problem. If the landlord refuses to cooperate, then residents begin to build a legal

case that can be used in housing court to seize the property and thereby close down the drug house. According to the Illinois nuisance abatement law, a court may act against a drug house by “restraining all persons . . . from using the building for a period of one year” if it establishes that “nuisance was maintained with the intentional, knowing, reckless or negligent permission of the owner.”<sup>12</sup>

Officials in the police department and mayor’s office took note of this strategy and secured two institutional changes that increased its effectiveness in the neighborhoods. First, a 1996 city ordinance whittled away real estate property rights by enacting a stricter version of the Illinois nuisance abatement law.<sup>13</sup> This ordinance imposes the burden of monitoring against illegal activities on the property owner and creates a fine for allowing a nuisance to occur. Furthermore, whereas the Illinois law requires the illegal activity to occur inside the premises,<sup>14</sup> the new law only requires a geographic nexus between the problem property and nuisance.

Second, the City’s Law Department has created a Drug and Gang House Enforcement Section that helps community policing groups utilize this law. They send staff lawyers to community beat meetings to provide expertise in the formulation and implementation of problem-solving strategies.<sup>15</sup> If residents identify and prioritize a drug house, the lawyer will independently deploy the law department’s resources to eliminate that drug house. According to the section’s supervising attorney, the office uses the same strategy of persuading first and prosecuting second, but with all of the power of city behind it.<sup>16</sup> They first send city inspectors to document all code violations in addition to the nuisance. They then invite the landlord to a meeting whose goal is to secure voluntary compliance with the law. If the landlord does not respond to the initial letter, rejects voluntary compliance, or does not show up to the meeting, corporation council pursues measures in administrative court. It asks for fines, and then for criminal contempt charges that can result in 180-days imprisonment. These two background measures, then, increase the autonomy of beat groups by using state power to strengthen strategies invented by communities themselves.

#### *Accountability: Monitoring, Adjudicating, Intervening, and Learning*

Beyond providing these three kinds of support, central authorities can also enhance the public accountability and deliberative quality of police and school governance by monitoring, publicizing, and, when necessary, intervening in local activities. Although this design of democracy gives local schools and neighborhood beats power to construct their own plans of action, it does not grant license to refuse to plan either by unreflectively continuing old habits or by doing nothing at all. Due to capriciousness or incapacity, the processes of some local units may unfairly exclude some citizens, be controlled by powerful and self-interested local individuals, or persist in their inability to address priority problems. Since local units subject to these various kinds of “deliberative breakdowns” will be often unable to restore the integrity of their internal democratic process, it falls to

centralized powers to ensure that local actors are indeed deliberating openly and effectively by constructing appropriate incentives and routines for monitoring and rectification.

To ensure that localities fulfill their minimal obligation to engage in structured problem solving, both the CPS and CPD require LSCs and beat groups respectively to document their deliberative processes and consequent actions. As mentioned above, each LSC must prepare and submit annual SIPs that follow uniform CPS guidelines that prescribe the form, but not the content, of their deliberations. Community policing groups must submit both long-term and monthly reports to document their deliberations and strategies. The officers in each beat, frequently working with residents, must prepare detailed reports called beat profiles that describe available resources, local institutions, demographics, and persistent problems. In addition to this baseline information, they must document their problem-solving deliberations, including descriptions of priority targets, strategies to address them, justifications of those strategies, actions taken, and observable results for their district supervisors in “beat plans.” Both the CPS and CPD supervisors review SIP and beat plans and return facially unsatisfactory plans—for example, those with missing plan elements—to local actors to help ensure that the stages of structured deliberation have been followed.

Such reporting offers a basic but quite imperfect indicator of the quality of deliberation. Two additional methods offer more accurate assessments: inspection and complaint. In the former, inspectors from central offices visit local units to both learn lessons from those that seem most inventive and to identify those that are performing poorly. Plans along these lines have been developed, but not yet adopted, for the CPS to establish a “Quality Assurance Agency” that would dispatch teams of educational experts—including consultants, master teachers and principals, and agency officials—to individual schools. Over the course of several days, the review team would observe classes, interview staff and students, and review planning documents in order to develop performance assessments.<sup>17</sup> The CPD has instituted a more hierarchical process in which top staff under the police superintendent meet with each of the twenty-five District Commanders to review levels of CAPS implementation, and there district commanders report on the activities of their individual beats. In addition to these proactive inspections, which are costly and difficult to execute, passive means can also detect procedural breakdowns. These sorts of mechanisms depend on citizen complaints rather than centralized inspections. When participants to local deliberation notice violations of deliberative norms, for example, principals who disregard parent input or police officers who refuse to implement actions set out in beat plans, they can lodge complaints with higher authorities such as district commanders and/or regional school staff. In the ideal, these complaints would then trigger active official scrutiny, and, if necessary, direct intervention. Although this dynamic does

occur informally, neither the CPS nor CPD has implemented official citizen complaint systems and procedures to detect local governance breakdowns.

Beyond this procedural monitoring, other measures attempt to assess the concrete outcomes of local problem solving. Centralized performance evaluation provides important tools for supervision and intervention. Appropriate outcomes data can also feed both local and systemwide deliberation. In formulating their school plans, for example, LSC members often use trends in standardized test scores to identify weak instructional or curricular areas. By comparing their methods with those of similarly situated but better performing schools, LSCs sometimes find promising school improvement strategies. Careful monitoring of outcomes can also alert central authorities to laggards that deserve disciplinary intervention or leaders that merit praise.

Developing and applying outcome measures that can realize these potential benefits of monitoring is, however, no simple matter. The difficulty lies in constructing measures that accurately reflect the impact of local strategies but that are insensitive to changes beyond their control. Although current tools fall short in this regard, both the CPS and CPD leaderships seem satisfied with traditional metrics such as standardized test scores and crime rates. Status quo metrics may enjoy favor because they are familiar and seem objective. The primary tool to assess student achievement in math, reading, writing, science, and social studies in Chicago, for example, is the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) which has been published continuously since 1942 and is used by school districts across the nation. Similarly, crime statistics for the city of Chicago have been gathered at both the municipal and federal (by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports) levels for more than fifty years and reflect obvious dimensions of public safety such as murder, rape, robbery, and assault. Altering metrics would require new administrative machinery and probably spark intense political conflict akin to the current battles over standardized testing.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, some reformers have offered performance metrics that are useful not only for comparing and assessing general conditions, but also potentially for judging and improving the success of local governance efforts. Education researchers at the Consortium on Chicago School Research have developed a metric for the *productivity* of a school, or grade within a school, that attempts to capture academic gains that result from programming.<sup>19</sup> They propose the following two-step method of calculating the productivity of a grade within a single school. First, take the subset of children who attended that grade for the entire year. Second, subtract comparable standardized test scores of that subset of students for a test administered at the beginning of the year from year-end test scores. This method discounts students who attend classes for only part of the year and also controls for differences in the preparation of students prior to enrollment in a grade. Annual productivity gains (or losses) that result from school specific factors can then be measured by subtracting one year's productivity from that of the

preceding year. Such a system, these researchers argue convincingly, is a better tool with which central office administrators, LSC members, and the public at large can gauge school governance efforts.

Generally, the construction and application of performance metrics, like the practices whose performance is measured, is a complex matter that itself ought to be the subject of participatory deliberation and open-minded transformation. Venerable metrics like test scores and crime rates were designed to track broad changes in the academic abilities of students and safety of neighborhoods and they may perform reasonably in that regard, although many doubt even that. However, they were not designed, and are much too crude, to determine which particular educational or policing activities are more effective than others. Incremental steps like the school productivity measures developed by the Chicago Consortium seem to offer straightforward gains, but ought to be viewed as the beginning of a deliberative process to develop metrics that are ever more useful for assessing and thus enhancing school improvement and problem-solving strategies, not the endpoint of a political or administrative struggle against current testing practices.

Central authorities can use existing or improved metrics as tools of accountability to identify local bodies that are laggards or leaders in deliberative governance. They can intervene to improve the performance of laggards through support or discipline. Conversely, they can publicize leaders, study their sources of success, and perhaps reward them as incentives to spur other groups. The CPS, and to a lesser extent the CPD, central offices have begun to implement comparative programs of this kind. In 1995, a series of reforms led from the center by Mayor Daley and his long-time associate and newly appointed CEO of Schools, Paul Vallas, sought to increase LSC and school accountability by disciplining laggards.<sup>20</sup> One of its central provisions created an “academic probation” status that marked schools where less than 15 percent of the students score at or above national norms on standardized reading tests for centralized assistance and scrutiny. This program placed 109 schools on academic probation status in 1996 during its first year of operation.

What sorts of corrective interventions did the CPS Office of Accountability impose? Far from reestablishing centralized direction over them, the probation program attempted to improve the quality of each school’s deliberative planning and problem-solving processes through center-locality collaboration. First, they provided additional educational resources by requiring each school to form a partnership with outside educational experts in the private or university sector. Second, they dispatched an intervention team, led by a probation manager assigned to the school, to work with staff and parents to review and improve their SIP by conducting an external review, use that report as the basis of LSC discussions to develop a Corrective Action Plan, and incorporate changes into successive SIPs. Finally, the Office of Accountability assigned a probation manager to monitor implementation of the new plan. Although the program has been in operation only

a short time, experience so far suggests that staffs and parents at probation schools, while at first wary of heavy-handed CPS intervention, have generally experienced the program as a sometimes painful, but collaborative and essentially self-directed project in enhancing their own capabilities.<sup>21</sup>

Four observations emerge from this brief account of central authority in Chicago's community policing and school governance reforms. First, the current institutional structure is neither centralized nor decentralized; although local officials and ordinary citizens enjoy much more power and voice than under the previous, more top-down, arrangements, they remain dependent on central offices for various kinds of support and accountable to them for both process integrity and performance outcomes. Second, the role of central power shifts fundamentally from that of directing local units (in the previous hierarchical system) to that of *supporting* local units in their own problem-solving endeavors and *holding them accountable* to the norms of deliberation and achievement of demanding but feasible public outcomes. Third, support and accountability from the center advances three democratic goals—participation, deliberation, and empowerment—that justify local autonomy in the first place. Finally, each of these central functions, like the projects of improving public safety and educational effectiveness that they support, is a complex matter with no obvious solutions. Therefore, the same principles that motivate the deliberative transformation of school and police governance also apply to the design of these central institutions. Even when practices like standardized testing are entrenched and enjoy wide support, alternatives might do better. Since the advantages of competing proposals are difficult to assess a priori (e.g., Should mobilization support services be provided by a city agency or community-based organizations?) institutions should open spaces for competing proposals rather than advancing the most politically expedient or administratively convenient one. Centralized interventions, themselves formulated through deliberation, would then further enhance the deliberative, participatory, and empowered character of otherwise isolated local actors. Although neither the CPS nor CPD has achieved such a fully deliberative transformation, many of its essential elements are in place in both these institutions. We turn now to the performance of these institutions in light of general concerns about the demands and potential pathologies of Empowered Deliberative Democracy.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. WHO PARTICIPATES?

Since these reforms and Empowered Deliberative Democracy generally aim to more intensively involve citizens in decision-making areas from which they were previously excluded, the first operational question is who, if anyone, utilizes them? Since participation requires much more time, knowledge, and energy from citizens than more common forms such as voting or contacting officials, engagement *levels* may be so low that school officials and police officers end up deliberating with each other rather than with those they serve. Since those who have less

generally participate less,<sup>23</sup> this concern is especially pressing in poor neighborhoods. Relatedly, there may be biases in participation that amount in the limiting case to systematic exclusion. This section examines participation levels and socioeconomic biases in participation and then reflects on the implications of this dimension of the Chicago reform experience for Empowered Deliberative Democracy.

### *Overall Participation*

To answer the question of how many citizens participate in Chicago's deliberative governance institutions, we rely on official CPS election statistics and beat meeting attendance records gathered by CPD beat officers and then compiled by researchers at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University. These records show that community policing and school governance exhibit a similar pattern of aggregate participation: generally, a community beat or LSC meeting draws between ten and twenty participants. In the case of LSCs, the participants are sometimes interested parents or community members with no official position but are most often the representatives elected to govern the school. Community policing offers no formal positions for residents and so attendance is always fully voluntary.

Figure 1 shows monthly meeting attendance in Chicago's 279 beats from January 1995 (when the community policing program expanded from five "prototype" districts to encompass the entire city) until June 1999. The wide month-to-month variation in beat meeting attendance corresponds to seasonal change; beat meeting attendance is lower in the winter months because weather makes it more difficult to travel to the meetings and reduces crime rates. With that qualification, note two features of this figure. On average, between 5,000 and 6,000 residents attend beat meetings each month. Since there are 279 beats and most meet monthly, between 17 and 21 residents generally attend each meeting in addition to five or six beat officers. This number, while a small percentage of the 4,000 to 6,000 adults who live typically in a beat, is more than enough for problem-solving planning and implementation. Second, although this structure of community beat meetings has existed only since 1995 and so trajectories are difficult to discern, there seems to be a slight upward trend in meeting attendance. This trend offers some preliminary evidence against the concern that the demands of participatory democracy may result in civic exhaustion and declining rates of participation.<sup>25</sup>

A similar pattern appears in school governance. Table 1 shows the number of candidates and voters, where available, in each of LSC elections since the initial contest in 1989. In terms of both candidacy and turnout, participation was very high in the first year and then dropped off to a lower, but relatively stable, level in successive elections. In the last three elections, the ratio of candidates to positions has been less than 1.5 in all three categories, which means that more than half of the seats are uncontested and so LSC service resembles volunteerism more than

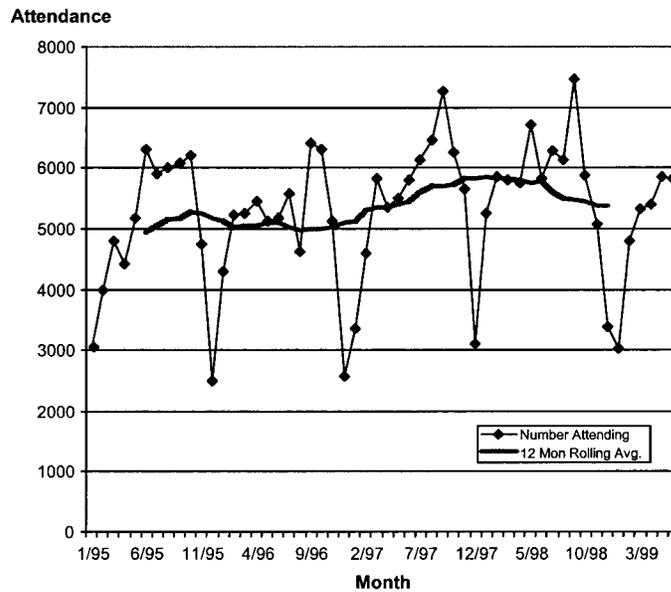


Figure 1. Monthly police beat meeting attendance, 1995-99.<sup>24</sup>

competitive selection. Furthermore, since the ratio is substantially greater than unity, few LSCs have empty seats. The number of citizens who actually engage in deliberation is much smaller than the number affected (roughly 4,000 residents live in the area served by a school), but LSCs are generally full so there are usually enough members to engage in school improvement planning and the levels of participation are for the most part stable.

#### *Socioeconomic Bias*

Who are these people that spend precious evenings discussing crime and schooling and some portion of their days doing what they promised to do in those discussions? In terms of socioeconomic advantages such as income and education, two general patterns emerge that are common to both school and police governance in Chicago. Surprisingly, those in low-income neighborhoods participate as much or more than people from wealthier ones. This evidence weighs against the claim that participatory reforms will benefit the advantaged but leave the disadvantaged behind because they lack the wherewithal to engage. Within any given neighborhood, however, the more advantaged—home owners and those with more income and education—participate at disproportionately greater rates. This pattern confirms the well-grounded intuition that resources and other advantages do influence citizens' abilities to participate.<sup>27</sup>

Engagement patterns in community policing are especially striking. There, contravening most empirical social science findings, residents from poor neigh-

Table 1  
*Local School Council Election Statistics*<sup>26</sup>

	Year	Parent	Community	Teacher	Total
Number of candidates (candidates per seat)	1998	4,106 (1.2)	1,540 (1.4)	1,471 (1.3)	7,117 (1.3)
	1996	4,493 (1.4)	1,682 (1.5)	1,620 (1.5)	7,795 (1.4)
	1993	4,254 (1.3)	1,495 (1.4)	1,612 (1.5)	7,361 (1.3)
	1991	4,739 (1.5)	1,858 (1.7)	1,545 (1.4)	8,142 (1.5)
	1989	9,329 (2.9)	4,818 (4.4)	2,429 (2.2)	16,576 (3.1)
Number of voters	1998	NA	NA	NA	NA
	1996	68,210	24,519	29,313	122,042
	1993	33,701	23,544	27,435	84,680
	1991	44,735	35,583	30,514	108,832
	1989	113,008	97,276	34,902	245,186

neighborhoods participate at *greater* rates than those from wealthy ones. The best predictor of neighborhood beat meeting attendance rate is the personal crime rate of the neighborhood, which itself tends to vary inversely with household income. Table 2 gives the multiple OLS statistics for beat meeting attendance rate<sup>28</sup> (attendees per 10,000 residents per meeting) regressed against (1) the percentage of beat residents that are African American, (2) percent Hispanic, (3) percentage of adults who have college degrees, (4) median household income, (5) personal crime rate, and (6) percentage of residences that are owned by their occupants. As can be seen from the Table 2, the only statistically significant factor in this regression—and the one with the most substantial coefficient—is personal crime rate.<sup>29</sup> According to this model, an increase of forty crimes per 1,000 residents (mean personal crime rate in Chicago was eighty-four crimes per 1,000 residents in 1996) corresponds to an increase in beat meeting attendance of eight persons per 10,000 adults, or some four persons per meeting in a medium-sized beat. The same predicted increase requires, according to this regression, an increase in neighborhood mean household income of \$20,000 (almost doubling the average neighborhood median household income of \$24,000). Interestingly, the effect of percent college educated on beat meeting attendance is small, but in the *opposite* of the expected direction; the regression model finds that the controlled effect of increasing the number of college graduates in a neighborhood weakly reduces beat meeting attendance. Although participation patterns in LSC elections have been less well documented and the trends themselves more equivocal, the data also weigh against the expectation that those in less well-off areas will also participate less. In their study of the 1991 LSC elections, the nonprofit school reform organization Designs for Change analyzed the number of candidates standing for election to parent seats on LSCs according to student body characteristics of race, income, and ethnicity. They found that an average of nine parental candidates stood for election at any given school and that there was no substantial relationship between levels of parental candidacy and (1) percentage of Hispanic students

Table 2  
*OLS Regression Results for Beat Meeting Attendance Rate*

	Coefficient ( <i>B</i> )	<i>SE</i>	Beta
Percent black	.0275	.0444	.0630
Percent Hispanic	.1012	.0673	.1285
Percent college educated	-.2174	.1405	-.1894
Median income	.0004	.0003	.1824
Personal crime rate*	.2038	.0397	.5512
Percent home owner	.0804	.1086	.0967

$R^2 = .275$   
 Observations = 270

\*Statistically significant at the  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  level of confidence.

Table 3  
*Predictors of Participation in 1996 Local School Council Elections, OLS Results*

Variable	Number of Parental Candidates			Parent Voting Turnout Rate		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Beta	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	Beta
School size	.002**	.0005	.246	—	—	—
Percent low income	-.005	.010	-.035	-.183**	.048	-.272
Mobility rate	-.006	.009	-.037	-.092*	.041	-.117
Percent black	-.007	.008	-.107	.113**	.037	.390
Percent Hispanic	-.003	.010	-.039	.122**	.045	.334
$R^2$	.075	.064				
Observations	465	465				

\*Coefficient is statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence.

\*\*Coefficient is statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence.

or (2) percentage of African American students.<sup>30</sup> The study also found a slight *positive correlation* between the percentage of low-income students at a given school and the number of parental candidates standing for election in 1991. The authors did not report full regression results, and so the correlation may have been statistically insignificant.

Using data from the 1996 Chicago LSC elections,<sup>31</sup> we independently analyzed the relationships between school-level variables such as school size, percentage of students from low-income families at a particular school,<sup>32</sup> student mobility,<sup>33</sup> percentage of African American students, and percentage of Hispanic students and two indicators of LSC participation: the number of parental candidates standing for election at each school<sup>34</sup> and the parent turnout at each election.<sup>35</sup> The multiple regression results—coefficients (*B*), standard errors, and standardized coefficients (beta)—are shown in the left half of Table 3. It should be noted that these variables explain very little—approximately 7.5 percent ( $R^2$ ) of the observed variation in number of parent candidates. Of the five independent variables, only

school size bears a statistically significant relationship with number of parental candidates.

The right-hand side of Table 3 reports the correlation between these same demographic variables and a second measure of participation: turnout rate of parents in the 1996 LSC elections. Turnout rate for each school is defined as the number of parents voting divided by the number of parents eligible to vote at that school's election. We omitted school size from this regression. As with the first regression, these variables account for only a small fraction—6.4 percent—of the observed variation in parental turnout rates. Unlike the previous model, however, all explanatory variables are statistically significant; the poverty, race, and ethnicity variables are statistically significant at the .01 level of confidence for a two-tailed *t*-test, and student mobility is significant at the .05 level. The magnitude of the coefficient on low income is small, but in the expected direction; as the percentage of low-income students at a school increases, parent turnout rate declines *slightly*. An increase of 25 percent in the portion of low-income students at a school corresponds to a decrease of 4.5 percent in the fraction of parents turning out to vote in an LSC election. Similarly, increases in student mobility (and thus decreases in school stability) produce small declines in parental turnout rates. Interestingly, the coefficients on race and ethnicity variables are also small, but in the *opposite* of the expected directions. Whereas previous studies have found that African American and people of Hispanic backgrounds are somewhat less likely to vote than others,<sup>36</sup> higher proportions of black and Hispanic students in a school correlated with slightly higher parental turnout rates in the 1996 LSC elections.

While these data show that the participation rates compared *across* neighborhoods does not exhibit straightforward biases against those in worse off areas, the same cannot be said for participation patterns considered *within* neighborhoods. Available data suggests that those who serve on LSCs and attend community beat meetings tend to be better off than their neighbors. A survey of all LSC members conducted in 1995 and 1996, reveals that LSC members were substantially better educated and more employed than other adults in Chicago. Thirty-one percent of LSC members surveyed had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with only 19 percent of adults in Chicago. Predictably, schools in more wealthy areas had more educated LSC members, but "even in schools with virtually all low-income students, the educational level of LSC members is almost equal to that of the general Chicago population."<sup>37</sup> LSC members are also more likely to hold professional jobs, less likely to occupy unskilled positions or be unemployed, and more likely to be "home with children" than the other adults in Chicago.<sup>38</sup> A similar pattern appears in community beat meeting participation: home owners and English speakers are more likely to know about beat meetings and attend them than are their less well-off neighbors.<sup>39</sup> As with rates of overall participation, these biases sketch an equivocal portrait for the Chicago style of deliberative governance. Contrary to skeptical expectations that reforms demanding active participation

will further disadvantage less well-off areas, residents of poor neighborhoods participate at rates equal to or greater than those from wealthy ones. Nevertheless, better-off residents are generally disproportionately well represented within neighborhood meetings.

### *How Much Participation Is Enough?*

These results lead to no straightforward assessments, either positive or negative, regarding the operations of deliberative democracy as it actually exists in Chicago. On one hand, the proportion of total adults who participate in these direct governance opportunities is much less than for conventional forms such as voting. If we judge desirability solely on the basis of how many people participate, then these experiments must be regarded as failures compared to voting. If we include additional desiderata—for example, citizens' knowledge over issues which they are asked to express opinions, the impact of those opinions on state action, and finally the effect of state action on social outcomes—then the current levels of participation exceed necessary minimums, greater participation might not be any more desirable, and so these patterns provide some ground for optimism about the Chicago reforms.

The eleven positions of LSCs are filled in the typical school and community policing beat meetings are on average attended by seventeen residents and six police officers. Meetings with much lower (say only two or three people) levels of average attendance would lead correctly to fundamental doubts about the viability of this variant of urban deliberative democracy. Very low participation would demonstrate lack of citizen interest, provide too few heads to generate information and effective solutions, and offer too few bodies to implement any resulting group decisions. On the other hand, much greater participation also creates difficulties. Neighborhood crises such as drive-by shootings or serial rapes, for example, often draw dozens of additional participants to community policing meetings. When 50 or 100 people attend, it becomes extremely difficult to conduct structured, much less sustained and inclusive, problem-solving deliberations. If there is a magic number for a group that is small enough so that all of its members can contribute seriously to an ongoing discussion, and yet large enough to offer diverse views and ample energies, it is probably not so far from the actual numbers of people that actually participate in groups constituted by the Chicago reforms.

Whereas voting is an infrequent activity for which there are few repercussions for either not voting or making poor choices, participation in LSCs or community policing groups requires much more knowledge and commitment, and in exchange offers a modicum of real decision power. Only those with an abiding concern in specific issues are likely to join these efforts. If these reforms were expanded to include other public problems such as the environment, social services, or employment—a possibility not developed here—the ideal of participation would not be one in which every citizen deliberates about every issue, but

in which everyone deliberates seriously about something. Current institutional arrangements do not offer such diverse opportunities for empowered discursive engagement, in Chicago at any rate, except in the governance of schools and police.

Patterns of participation with respect to time and socioeconomic status also ease some serious concerns about the sustainability and fairness of these intensively deliberative governance institutions. Although both are relatively new, their short track records of ten and four years for school governance and community policing, respectively, indicate that participation levels have been for the most part stable, and so signs of citizen exhaustion have not surfaced. Regarding fairness, these institutions offer substantial advantages over more familiar forms of political participation—such as voting, contacting officials, and interest group activism—that display strong biases favoring the better off. Despite this surprising absence of conventional biases, these quantitative characteristics of participation leave many open questions. While enough people participate across many kinds of neighborhoods, it remains to be seen whether their actions meet the demanding standards of deliberation or whether they fall victim to pathologies such as domination, corruption, or incompetence. Having established that diverse citizens do participate in the Chicago reforms, we turn now to these questions about the structure and quality of participation.

##### 5. DELIBERATION OR DOMINATION? PROBLEM SOLVING IN TWO NEIGHBORHOODS

Do the diverse citizens and street-level bureaucrats<sup>40</sup> who join in Chicago school and police governance actually engage in open deliberation and fair exchange about how best to advance public ends? Or, are these decision processes more often characterized by the domination of officials over residents, more advantaged citizens over the less well off, or factional paralysis? Although no study has yet examined all of the beats and schools in Chicago to definitively determine whether these governance transformations have produced substantial domination and corruption, less systematic evidence and observation affords some preliminary purchase on this critical set of issues. Except in one or two well-publicized instances,<sup>41</sup> the most blatant forms of illegal theft and fraud have not surfaced in either the community policing or school governance reforms. At the other extreme, no informed observer would seriously argue that school and police governance processes have been fully deliberative or domination free. This section offers two accounts of typical conflicts to show how a structure of accountable autonomy that connects central supervisors to locally autonomous groups can set deliberation on track and reap its fruits.<sup>42</sup>

*Deadlock in Central School*

Like many schools on the city's south side, Central Elementary sits in a neighborhood that is 100 percent African American and very poor. The median household income in 1990 was \$15,000. In addition to contending with the typical problems of poor inner-city neighborhood schools, this one also suffered paralyzing conflicts, stemming from old feuds, among the parents, teachers, and the principal. Many dimensions of the school's operation—including academic performance, discipline, and the condition of the grounds—suffered from this collective inaction and stalled governance.

The most visible signs of this decay came from the building itself. The rooms and halls were ill kept and often dark. Although the building itself was overcrowded, the failure to repair water damage rendered three classrooms unusable and so further exacerbated class-size limitations. Insufficient resources cannot explain away this situation, as similarly funded schools elsewhere had superior physical plans. The school also suffered from rather high chronic truancy rates. In 1996, 6 percent of its students missed more than 10 percent of the school days without excuse.<sup>43</sup> Teachers and other school staff complained that they were unable to discipline those children who attended class. Many classes were loud and unruly, and students often roamed the halls without supervision. Perhaps the most damning and consequential indicators of nonperformance, however, were the low standardized test scores of Central's students. In 1996, only 14.6 percent of students there met or exceeded national reading norms according to the ITBS, and only 13.4 percent of Central students met or exceeded that test's math norms in that year. By these measures, Central fell within the lowest decile of worst-performing Chicago schools in math and reading.

This poor student test performance triggered an accountability mechanism called probation whereby the CPS dispatched an expert "intervention team." Many at Central feared that these central office administrators would take back much of the autonomy that had been given to its LSC under the 1988 law. To their surprise, the next few months did not require them to give up power to external authorities. Instead, the probation team forced LSC members and others in the school community to break through their entrenched lines of conflict into more serious deliberations about strategies that might improve the school.

The intervention team made two main contributions to improve deliberation at Central Elementary. First, they conducted a review of the school that pointed out problems such as LSC budgeting decisions, lack of teacher monitoring, ineffective use of school staff, poor instructional technique and classroom management, funded but vacant teacher positions, and poor physical plant. Although their report contained solutions to these problems, the team made it clear that these were recommendations rather than orders. The LSC developed a corrective action plan after reflecting on this report and incorporating the perspectives and knowl-

edge of its own members. Second, the intervention team was widely respected and thus able to facilitate the LSC's deliberative planning effort.

After six months, LSC members seemed to have transcended their histories of conflict. They began to behave cordially to one another and, more important, to deliberate about substantive school improvement issues rather than using meetings as occasions for political maneuvering. Substantively, the LSC reached consensus on a corrective action plan that included funds to make capital improvements to increase classroom space, fill shortages of instructional materials, extend the school's computer network, and purchase additional equipment for the science lab. Whereas a discussion of indicators of school progress such as test scores would have likely drawn accusations and defensive responses only six months earlier, LSC members used the June meeting as an occasion for thoughtful reflection on the school's weak grades. Whereas the principal had been a highly controversial figure several months earlier, the group gained respect for her through several months of facilitated deliberation and the LSC voted unanimously to renew her contract.

#### *From Laissez-Faire Domination to Structured Deliberation in Traxton Beat*

Consider now community policing in a neighborhood called Traxton that also lies on the south side but several miles distant from Central Elementary. This neighborhood is literally split in half by railroad tracks, with wealthy, mostly white, professionals living on the west side and lower-middle-class African Americans on the east. It is only by administrative coincidence that these two groups lie in the same police beat, for their problems are very different. West-side residents face occasional burglaries, illegal traffic and noise, loitering and drinking, and the like. East sides, on the other hand, face armed robbery, occasional gunshots from houses or passing automobiles, and a house in the middle of their section where people come to buy narcotics. Over one year, three people had been shot to death within one block of this house.

Empirically informed critics<sup>44</sup> would not be surprised that community deliberations often led to a misallocation of police resources. This group elected a beat facilitator each year. In 1996, the beat facilitator conducted meetings in a laissez-faire, first-come-first-served style in which residents raised problems as they came to mind. In that mode, wealthy and educated west-side residents dominated proceedings with their priority concerns. These included a potentially dangerous abandoned building, noise from late-night patrons of a nearby pancake house, street peddlers, and generally poor 911 response. Police, often in cooperation with west-side residents, were able to resolve most of these issues. But the concerns of east-side residents, often more serious, went for the most part unaddressed.

This pattern began to change in 1997 upon the election of a new beat facilitator; call her Emily Crenshaw. Unlike the previous facilitator, Crenshaw had worked

for CANS as an official community policing trainer.<sup>45</sup> From this experience, she was schooled in the procedures and techniques of problem solving and had instructed many beat groups in those techniques. When she became beat facilitator of Traxton, she utilized her experience by imposing a recommended structure on previously unstructured discussions and by directing the group to produce a “beat plan,” required according to recent CPD directives, that would describe and justify the neighborhoods top safety issues.

Crenshaw facilitated discussions using the procedure described in section 2. She first asked participants to generate a comprehensive list of candidate problems. West-side residents raised many of the concerns that had been raised in previous meetings. Creating this brainstorming space, however, allowed east-side residents to bring up many items about which they had been previously silent. When it came time to designate priorities, participants from both sides of the beat easily reached consensus on an ordered list dominated by east-side problems: an alleged drug house on the east side, burglaries and armed robberies on an east-side commercial strip, and west-side residential burglaries. Once charged with ranking and discursively justifying an agenda of public safety problems, the better-off residents quickly agreed that the east-side house around which shootings occurred and drugs were trafficked topped the list and therefore deserved the lion’s share of their attention and that of the police.

Having prioritized these problems, residents and police developed cooperative and effective strategies. Resident surveillance and police searches yielded arrests around the alleged drug house, court testimony from organized residents helped send some of those perpetrators to jail, and residents reported substantial reductions in criminal activity there. To address commercial burglaries, police increase their patrol visibility and worked with African American store owners to develop preventative measures and to enhance their own responsiveness. These proprietors also report that thefts and robberies declined following the interventions. Due to their sporadic nature, residential burglaries are harder to address and progress against them more difficult to assess. The group attempted to solve this third problem through plainclothes surveillance and resident education. Police apprehended one serial burglar, but the problem lingered on.

### *Redux*

These two experiences may seem to highlight the defects of deliberative decision making. The “natural” course of autonomous discursive governance led to conflictual paralysis in Central Elementary and to domination by wealthy and well-educated residents in Traxton Beat. Then both seem to have been fortunate beneficiaries of external forces—an intervention team in Central and community policing trainer/facilitator in Traxton—that set deliberation back on track. Seen from the perspective of accountable autonomy, these interventions ought to result from design rather than luck: centralized supervisors ought to develop capacities

to monitor the deliberations of local groups and intervene when necessary. The experiences of Central and Traxton illustrate how helpful external interventions presently result from design and luck in equal measure. Both interventions depended upon prior centralized initiatives: the CPS school probation program and the CPD training initiative. Each, however, was lucky to have received external support. The probation team was assigned to Central Elementary as a result of its low standardized test scores, but there are surely many schools whose students test satisfactorily, but whose governance suffers similar paralysis or domination. It was even more a matter of chance that one of Traxton's community policing participants was an experienced CPD trainer, that she was willing to serve as beat facilitator, and that she was elected. Looking forward, the model of accountable autonomy would prescribe developing institutions that make these interventions deliberate priorities rather than leaving them to fortune.

Both cases, however, also illustrate two other benefits of autonomous deliberative local action. In both, opposed factions possessing unequal resources overcame differences of interest and perspective when their discussions were appropriately, and deliberatively, structured and facilitated. Supporting proponents of deliberative decision making, participants subordinated at least some of their interests for the sake of reasonable norms or the process led them to broaden or transform their prior interests. After doing so, they were able to devise and implement creative strategies and plans that were probably more effective than what school officials and police would have accomplished on their own. In Traxton Beat, for example, residents contributed information and organized to act in ways that police could not have done.

#### 6. OPEN QUESTIONS: THE EFFECTIVENESS AND POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABLE AUTONOMY

Given the relative youth of these experiments and the constraints of a single article, this partial exploration into the real and potential deliberative qualities of the Chicago community policing and school governance reforms necessarily raises more questions than it answers. By way of conclusion, consider two particularly important issues: the overall effectiveness of these reforms in improving schools and beats and the political controversies surrounding these reforms.

Scholars and citizens alike rightly wonder about the effectiveness of these reforms compared with other alternatives. In education, schools governed along the lines of accountable autonomy should be compared with public school systems with small classrooms and well-trained teachers, high-stakes testing, charter schools, or fully privatized districts. Chicago-style community policing might be compared with strictly professional problem-oriented policing, enhanced managerialism, or privatized security. Unfortunately, we can offer no such comparison of systematic alternatives at this point. Research on the Chicago reforms

does indicate, however, that the reforms have achieved some gains compared with preceding arrangements.

Careful examination of test scores suggests that the effectiveness of Chicago schools has improved since the devolutionary reforms of 1988, but especially since the accountability amendments to those reforms in 1995. Anthony Bryk and his associates<sup>46</sup> developed a metric of school productivity, described in section 3, that attempts to isolate the impact of school factors—such as teaching, curriculum, atmosphere—on student learning while discounting factors that cannot be controlled through site governance efforts such as the preparedness of children when they enter the school. Based upon an analysis that applies this productivity metric to the historical files of CPS student test scores between 1987 and 1997, the authors found that, while students entering the system have become increasingly disadvantaged and less well prepared, the majority of schools have become more effective in educating them.

Chicago school reform has precipitated substantial improvements in achievement in a very large number of Chicago public elementary schools. The governance reforms of 1988 and 1995 have significantly advanced the learning opportunities afforded to literally hundreds of thousands of Chicago's children. While more improvements are still needed, these results should nonetheless encourage the public that Chicago's schools can substantially improve and that this is, in fact, occurring.<sup>47</sup>

While a similar metric to measure the productivity of the public safety efforts of police and residents would be much more difficult to construct and no one has yet attempted to develop it, the number of violent crimes has declined steadily since citywide community policing programs began in 1995.<sup>48</sup>

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1994-98 Percentage Change
Murder	928	824	789	757	702	-24
Sexual assault	3,048	2,896	2,752	2,545	2,387	-21
Robbery	33,949	30,086	26,860	25,289	23,117	-31
Aggravated assault	40,425	39,205	37,097	36,519	36,740	-9

These figures are comparable to the much more publicized declines in New York City under Mayor Rudolph Guliani's contrasting policing approach.

These figures offer no precise assessment of Chicago's reforms compared with other alternatives. Its approach is not at this time demonstrably better, but perhaps no worse, on aggregate performance measures than approaches based on more expert command or market mechanisms. Until more definitive assessments are available, then, the primary attraction of these reforms lies in their democratic quality. They create new channels of citizen voice, influence, and deliberation that are widely utilized in Chicago, especially by those who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods. According to surveys,<sup>49</sup> 14 percent of Chicagoans attended at

least one beat meeting in 1997. By far the majority of people of color who are elected officials in Illinois serve on LSCs. This democratic experience, together with the conceptual arguments for the effectiveness of accountable autonomy offered above and the uncertain relative performance of other alternatives, favors keeping this institutional design in our repertoire of reform strategies.

A second important open question concerns the political basis of accountable autonomy. In a world where the politics and ideas of reform are dominated by the dichotomy between devolution—either as community control or the market—versus the centralization of expert managerialism, a hybrid model such as that just presented finds little traction and few predisposed supporters. The actual institutions that approximate accountable autonomy emerged fitfully from struggles between the neighborhoods and downtown, first as community control, then as the remedies to its defects, and perhaps finally as the reassertion of central power. In these contests, neighborhood and community participants fear that centralized power entails the infringement of rightful autonomy while turning a blind eye to their own shortcomings. Many in the central offices of CPD and CPS worry that local autonomy will decay into paralysis or license and are oversensitive to criticisms of them that come from neighborhood and watchdog groups. Many would, if they could, impose commands that reach for effectiveness by short-circuiting local deliberation, without recalling the many problems of their agencies prior to the decentralizing, community participation reforms.

For now, neither neighborhood nor center can impose its side of the dichotomy. The neighborhoods have tasted power, entrenched it in law or administrative rule, and are reluctant to cede it. But city hall and the agency heads are strong in Chicago, and have eroded many local and independent prerogatives. As we saw above, for example, officials have reduced the roles of independent groups in providing training and mobilization services. In school governance, some of the original latitude for local principal selection and instruction has been narrowed, while some police administrators are reducing opportunities for community participation by decreasing beat meeting frequency.

Occasionally because of this conflict but more often in spite of it, many elements of accountable autonomy have emerged in the CPS and CPD reforms. Conflict and randomness, however, have limited the extent to which the complementary sides of this structure can contribute to fair and effective police and school governance. The commands of central officials sometimes reduce autonomy and overrule sensible and perhaps more effective local deliberation. On the other hand, as we saw in Central and Traxton, well-justified accountability measures often result from fortunate conjunctions. Deepening the institutionalization of accountable autonomy in the CPS and CPD thus requires a new politics and reform vision. In that scenario, proponents of localism would recognize the contributions of central power and the necessity of external accountability mechanisms. Those accustomed to managing and commanding would see the limitations in their own foresight and capability and respect the knowledge and ingenuity of those who work

and live in the neighborhoods by seeking to foster it. While the possibility of such a politics may appear remote, reflecting upon the improbable accomplishments of democratic reform thus far makes it seem less so. Whatever its likelihood, this practical deliberative democracy requires a grammar and vision that reach beyond the simple antithesis between centralization and decentralization.

## NOTES

1. Among the many excellent books on the “blood and guts” of Chicago politics see William J. Grimshaw, *Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) and Milton L. Rakove, *Don't Make No Waves, Don't Back No Losers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975).

2. See, for example, Herman Goldstein, *Problem Oriented Policing* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992).

3. See Wesley G. Skogan and Susan M. Hartnett, *Community Policing: Chicago Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

4. For a discussion of the liabilities of small group decision, see Jane Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980) and John Gastil, *Democracy in Small Groups: Participation, Decision Making, and Communication* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers, 1993).

5. See Malcolm K. Sparrow, Mark H. Moore, and David M. Kennedy, *Beyond 911: A New Era for Policing* (New York: Basic Books, 1990) and Herman Goldstein, *Problem Oriented Policing* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992).

6. See Archon Fung, “Contract Expired: Is Chicago Poised to Take the Community Out of Community Policing?” *Neighborhood Works*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (March/April 1997): 8-9.

7. Dan Scheid, “Board Bumps Reform Groups from LSC Training,” *Catalyst: Voices of Chicago School Reform*, Vol. 10, No. 1. (September 1998); Alison Pflapsen, “LSCs Lose 182 Members Who Didn't Complete Training,” *Catalyst* (May 1999).

8. The Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium, *Community Policing in Chicago, Years Five-Six: An Interim Report* (Evanston: Institute for Policy Research, May 1999), 18.

9. *Ibid.*

10. William S. McKersie, “Private Funding Down for LSC Elections,” *Catalyst* 7, no. 6 (March 1996).

11. Dan Weissmann, Jennifer Randall, Lisa Lewis, and Jason Grotto, “Did Community Groups Have an Impact,” *Catalyst* 7, (May 1996).

12. *720 Illinois Compiled Statutes*, sec. 37-4 (1996).

13. The ordinance described in this paragraph went into effect on 11 November 1996. See “Amendments of Titles 8 and 13 of Municipal Code of Chicago Concerning Liability of Property Owners and Management for Unlawful Activities on Property,” *Chicago City Council Journal*, 31 July 1996, 27730-35.

14. The state statute was originally targeted against prostitution.

15. This program, called the “Corporation Council Program,” is presently being tested in five “prototype” police districts. It began on 1 November 1996.

16. Telephone interview (27 February 1997).

17. See Steven R. Strahler, “It's Back-To-School Time: Daley's Crisis Plan Begins To Take Shape,” *Craine's Chicago Business*, 10 April 1995, 3.

18. See National Research Council, *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999).

19. Details in this paragraph are taken from Anthony S. Bryk, Yeow Meng Thum, John Q. Easton, and Stuart Luppescu, *Academic Productivity of Chicago Public Elementary Schools: A Technical Report Sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research* (Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, March 1998).

20. For a more detailed account, see Archon Fung, "Street Level Democracy: A Theory of Popular Pragmatic Deliberation and Its Practice in Chicago School Reform and Community Policing, 1988-1997" (doctoral diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999).

21. Elizabeth Druffin, "Spotlight Brings Focus: One School's Probation Story," *Catalyst: Voices of Chicago School Reform*, Vol. 9, No. 9. (June 1998); Fung (1999), especially chaps. 8 and 15.

22. Described in Fung and Wright's article in this issue.

23. See, for example, Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Jack Nagel, *Participation* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1987).

24. These data were provided to the author by Wesley Skogan at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research.

25. For an argument that high frequency of elections depresses participation, see Robert Jackman and Ross Miller, "Voter Turnout in the Industrial Democracies During the 1980s," *Comparative Political Studies* 27, no. 4 (January 1995): 467-92.

26. Catalyst staff, "Local School Council Elections," *Catalyst: Voices of Chicago School Reform* 7, no. 8 (May 1996): 26. 1998 election statistics from Rosalind Rossi, "School Races Attract Few Candidates," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 6 April 1998, 8.

27. See Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

28. This rate is given as attendees per meeting per 10,000 residents, with the attendance for each beat averaged over all available meeting data from January 1995 until May 1997. Crime rate is calculated from 1996 figures, and other remaining demographic data is drawn from the 1996 census.

29. When percent home owners is removed from the list of regression variables, both percent college educated and median income become statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating multicollinearity between these variables.

30. Designs for Change, *The Untold Story: Candidate Participation in the 1991 Chicago Local School Council Elections* (Chicago: Designs for Change, October 1991).

31. Candidate and turnout data were very kindly provided by Mr. Doug Dillon of Management Information Services at the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Demographic information on schools was taken from CPS, Office of Accountability, *The Illinois State School Report Card Data Book for 1995-96: An Analysis of Student, School, District, and State Characteristics* (Chicago: CPS, 1996).

32. A student is classified as "low income" just in case he or she is from a family receiving public aid, lives in an institution for neglected or delinquent children, is supported in a foster home with public funds, or is eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. In 1996, approximately four-fifths of Chicago students are classified as low income, while less than one-fifth of the students in the state of Illinois are classified as low income. See CPS, Office of Accountability, *The Illinois State School Report Card Data Book for 1995-96: An Analysis of Student, School, District, and State Characteristics* (Chicago: CPS, 1996).

33. Student mobility at a school is defined as the number of students enrolling in a school or leaving that school during a single school year. Students may be counted more than once.

34. Recall that each local school council (LSC) provides six positions for parent representatives.

35. Parent turnout is given as the percentage of parents eligible to vote in the election who actually vote.

36. See Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1993) and Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 233.

37. This survey was sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research and its results are reported in Susan Ryan, Anthony Bryk, Susan P. Ryan, Anthony S. Bryk, Gudelia Lopez, Kimberly P. Williams, Kathleen Hall, Stuart Luppescu, eds., *Charting Reform: LSCs—Local Leadership at Work* (Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, December 1999), 6.

38. *Ibid.*, 7.

39. Institute for Policy Research (1999), 28-29.

40. This term comes from Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemma of the Individual in the Public Services* (New York: Russell Sage, 1980).

41. See Michael Martinez, "Clement's Council Renews Principal War," *Chicago Tribune*, 18 November 1997.

42. These cases are described in much more detail in Fung (1999), chaps. 13 and 15.

43. CPS, Office of Accountability, *The Illinois State School Report Card Data Book for 1995-96: An Analysis of Student, School, District, and State Characteristics* (Chicago: CPS, 1996). The Chicago-wide chronic truancy rate in that year was 4.7 percent.

44. See, for example, Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (June 1997), 347-76 and Mansbridge (1980).

45. See discussion of Joint Community-Police Training Project in section 3.

46. Anthony Bryk, Yeow Meng Thum, John Q. Easton, and Stuart Luppescu, *Academic Productivity in Chicago Public Elementary Schools: A Technical Report* (Chicago: Chicago Consortium on School Research, March 1998).

47. *Ibid.*, 44.

48. Illinois State Police, Division of Administration, Crime Studies Section, *Crime in Illinois—1998* (Springfield: State of Illinois, April 1999).

49. Institute for Policy Research (1999), 18.