

Under the Radar:
School Surveillance and Youth Resistance

By Jennifer Weiss

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Urban Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City of New York.

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Abstract

Under the Radar: School Surveillance and Youth Resistance

by

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This dissertation chronicles the rise of school safety and surveillance policy in New York City and gives an overview of the wider, neoliberal policy context out of which contemporary school surveillance policy has emerged. More and more, public schools are becoming part of the network of post-9/11, state-sponsored surveillance -- spaces in which students experience firsthand what it is to be monitored, feared, contained, and harassed and in the name of safety and protection. Across the country, urban and suburban public schools are choosing to respond to issues related to violence and school safety by deploying an array of surveilling techniques and technologies. These include: cameras, metal detectors, scanning wands, security and police personnel, and ID tracking systems. As has been widely documented in a series of reports, however, these measures do not necessarily produce safer school environments. Students refer to an increase in the number of violent incidences, attest to harassment they experience at the hands of police and school safety agents (SSA), and describe a feeling of danger and disillusion.

This dissertation draws upon several theoretical frameworks to analyze surveillance practices and policies in an urban school, and provides an analysis of these

practices and policies across a sociopolitical landscape. In this context, this study analyzes the concept of resistance by examining three forms that emerged during my research including protest, tactical avoidance, and appropriation. The most surprising and important form of resistance was that of an after school poetry club and its use of writing as a form of ‘sousveillance’ which means to ‘survey from below’.

Over the course of eight months, I conducted ongoing theoretical research and participatory observation focused on how urban students in public schools across New York City, particularly those in high-need schools, were confronting and contending with the daily injustices of school-based surveillance. The study reveals how urban teenagers perceive being watched and monitored so pervasively – often through a lens of suspicion. Further, it explores how they negotiate, play with, or manipulate the gaze of surveillance all around them.

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INTRODUCTION

*... Now when I walk into school listen
to what security has to say
“Good morning ladies and gentlemen,
Please take all metal objects out of
Your pockets, this should be done before
You get up to the door, make sure you take
Your belts off, cause if the detector goes off,
To the back you go, don’t tell me, ‘o mister I ain’t know’.
Cause frankly, I don’t care, whether you had a bobby pin in your hair,
or a cell phone stashed in your underwear, that’s on you see?
Cause I guarantee, there’s no way through security, so just
Please obey the rules, and you’ll have a wonderful day at school”*

~from a poem by Ben Torres, student at Baldwin High School

This dissertation is a critical research study and theoretical social analysis of urban school surveillance practices and policies. My interest in this topic grew out of a concern for the ways urban teenagers must contend with being watched and profiled in an urban metropolis like New York City. In my role as an after-school educator -- as the founder and director of a poetry and spoken word organization from 1999 to 2004 -- I witnessed an increase in surveillance strategies being deployed in several large urban high schools across the city, implemented in the name of greater security and safety. I found very little information about the implications of these often divisive, always alienating surveillance technologies in educational spaces.

My concern piqued in March 2005. The organization I directed, Urban Word NYC, was hosting its annual teen poetry slam, an event that took place every year at several venues across the city. Over 500 teenagers from the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island would come together and perform poetry as part of this competition; certain youth would advance to the Grand Slam Finals. The only event of its

kind, one of the few that celebrated what teenagers had to say about issues that were important to them, the slam proudly drew a diverse audience. Every year, UW sought out a large venue for the Finals event because it drew crowds over 1,500 people. This year we were proud to be hosting the Finals at a nearby high school – one of the oldest in the city, located near Union Square and close to the subways. After some negotiation, the school had offered us the use of its very old auditorium at a very reasonable rate. This would be the first time we had presented our climactic event inside an actual high school and we were excited. We felt this represented a partnership between in-school and out-of-school time. On the day of the Saturday Finals, our staff showed up to the high school to set up early. To my surprise, we were met by over 60 officers being briefed on how to ensure safety among the large crowd of participants and attendees. Metal detectors were being wheeled into place near the side entrance of the school. Tables were unfolded so that bags could be checked and bodies could be splayed out and scanned if necessary.

Over 1,500 attendees stood outside on a line that extended down several blocks, in the cold of March. They were waiting to enter a venue to listen to teenagers recite their poetry and spoken word. While standing in line, people were told to remove their belts, shoes, and metal from their pockets in order to expedite the process of passing through security. As the director of the organization hosting this event, I could do nothing about it. I stood in the grand foyer of the old school building and stared at the sixty officers, two metal detectors, and the kids and their families who were being scanned and scrutinized by security guards. Never in our experience as an organization had this taken place. Not at any other venue over the last six years – not at The Apollo in Harlem, nor

the Nuyorican Poets Café nor even Madison Square Garden -- had our audience members been required to pass through metal detectors nor considered threats to public safety. Urban Word had maintained a solid reputation as an after-school organization in the community and had no prior incidents of violence at any of our events. I took it personally.

The irony of the situation struck me on a number of levels. After years of working in and out of high schools, teaching and mentoring teenage writers, poets, and rappers, producing hundreds of public events, and being exposed to the daily trials and tribulations of what it means to be a youth of color in New York City, the circumstances of this particular event disturbed me. It resonated more than it might have otherwise because it seemed so ironic that the NYPD's school safety agents would be asked to work (and paid overtime, I later learned) for monitoring one of the few events in which urban youth drop their weapons and their 'fronts', as Janelle Dance (2002) might say, and speak their experience in a safe environment. This was one of the few events in which teenagers came together across social class and racial boundaries and listened to each other. One of the rare moments when parents and aunts and cousins and friends turn out in support and hear, sometimes for the first time, the missives and rants of their young relatives and friends. There was something so ironic about the overbearing presence of police that day.

The event awakened me to the encroachment of surveillance practices in urban public schools.

More and more, public schools are becoming part of the network of post-9/11, state-sponsored surveillance -- spaces in which students experience firsthand what it is to

be monitored, feared, contained, and harassed and in the name of safety and protection. Across the country, urban and suburban public schools are choosing to respond to issues related to violence and school safety by deploying an array of surveilling techniques and technologies. These include: cameras, metal detectors, scanning wands, security and police personnel, ID tracking systems. As has been widely documented in a series of recent reports, however, these measures don't necessarily produce safer school environments. Students refer to an increase in the number of violent incidences, attest to harassment they experience at the hands of police and school safety agents (SSA), and describe a feeling of danger and disillusion.

Unlike Urban Word's poetry slam event, which was designed specifically so that youth could express themselves, there are few, if any opportunities for students or their parents to raise their voices in public protest of those policies being implemented inside their school. In the context of punitive zero tolerance laws, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reforms, and excessive policing, the power of surveillance is its ability to disrupt and silence dissent (Schlosberg, 2006). Surveillance practices in schools have the potential to separate and target individuals, making collective opposition difficult. There is great risk in speaking out against these policies, from inside these schools, and there are no straightforward mechanisms in place for students to file complaints or hold school safety agents accountable for inappropriate or abusive behavior (NYCLU, 2007).

As I began developing my research questions, our spoken word poetry event continued to inform my area of interest. My research commenced soon after. As it progressed, it became much clearer to me that it wasn't the irony of metal detectors,

school cops, and video cameras in spaces of learning that bothered me so much. It was the injustice. More and more, I became concerned that urban students in public schools across New York City, particularly those in high-need schools, were having to confront and contend this injustice on a daily, sanctioned basis. I wanted to know what urban teenagers were thinking about in relation to being watched so pervasively; how they were perceiving such monitoring and suspicion. Was this daily scrutiny crushing their spirit and damning their dignity? Or were they finding ways to negotiate, play with, or manipulate the gaze of surveillance all around them? I wanted to know how they were coping with and contesting school surveillance.

The Study

From October 2005 to August 2006, I conducted a qualitative research study utilizing ethnographic methods with a purposeful sampling of twenty boys and girls of color between the ages of 15 and 23, from across New York City. A detailed description of each of these students is located in the appendix. These youth were chosen to reflect the dominant make up of New York City's lower and middle-tier high schools, and were also from two distinct sites. Half were students involved with Urban Word NYC (UW)¹. The students from UW were selected based on their participation in a year-long journalism workshop. I co-taught this after school class, in which students fused basic journalistic strategies with spoken word. As part of the workshop, students conducted research on issues of policing and surveillance. Additionally, I met with these students

¹ Urban Word NYC is an after-school poetry, spoken word, and hip hop organization that provides New York City teenagers free after-school workshops, all-youth open mic spaces, and an annual teen poetry slam. It was founded in 1999.

outside of the class and conducted interviews and focus groups with them and with other members of UW.

In September 2005, a month before my formal research had begun, an important event occurred that helped direct my attention to the second body of my participants. That September, 1,500 high school students from a large, comprehensive high school in the Bronx² (which will be referred to as Baldwin High) walked out of the school in protest of the installation of metal detectors. They left the school's premises, walked 3 miles under police escort, and demanded a meeting with their Region's Superintendent and other Department of Education officials (Santos, 2005). Although students and youth organizers had initiated protests on other public high school campuses in the past, this protest remains the only of its kind in size and visibility and drew print and television media coverage. The walkout had one other feature: it was student-organized.

Because one of my central research questions was about how students were coping with and contesting surveillance policies, I wanted to work with students from this very high school and, although I had no formal contacts with the school, I began finding ways of getting to it and to them. Before long, I initiated contact with one student, Elizabeth Perez³, who was involved with Urban Word NYC. She was on the organization's youth board, in fact. Elizabeth had been a key "organizer" of the walkout and was key not only in informing me about her school and its policies before the walkout and after, but also in helping me establish other contacts at the school. She was

² The high school featured in this chapter is populated by close to 5,000 low-income youth of color (predominately Latino and/or African American students – see index for numbers) from its surrounding areas. It is a large, old, over-crowded urban New York City high school located in the Northwest Bronx. Students are tracked upon entrance into the school; one of the school's specialized programs has a strong reputation even among top-tier public high schools.

³ All of the students in my research chose to be named. I have not used pseudonyms.

also a poet and, since the walkout had “failed” to materialize the results students were hoping for, the bulk of her energy was focused on a new after school Hip Hop Poetry Club, which she had also founded. She invited me to come to the Poetry Club’s weekly Tuesday meetings at the school which I did every week for six months.

Using the lens of surveillance, my research involved working closely with ten students from Baldwin High. This was in the period just after their daily school experience had shifted from one of relative freedom, to one in which they were met daily with immobile metal detectors, armed police, and security guards. They were no longer able to carry cell phones or MP3 players to or from school; in place of an open campus lunch policy, students were now kept inside for what was unfortunately named ‘captive’ lunch.

I soon found that the students whom I worked with at UW—who also attend public high schools, many of which have police and metal detectors on site—did not perceive school surveillance in such an acute way. I began attributing this in part to the fact that they had become acclimated to the morning routine of traveling through security and scanners, or hadn’t yet been exposed to such rigorous daily encounters. They did, however, understand the threat of sanctioned and overt surveillance from peers in other high schools.⁴ The youth from UW, many of whom attend or attended large public high schools with their own versions of surveillance protocol, offered input that complemented

⁴ Of the 10 UW students who were among my research participants, each of them attested to ongoing monitoring in one way or another. One student attended a high school that had metal detectors for four years. Her entire high school experience included them. Another student’s Brooklyn high school was slowly introducing them to her campus through Bloomberg’s and Klein’s ‘roving metal detector’ policy introduced in April 2006. And all of them spoke fluently about what surveillance felt like when walking into stores or malls or corner bodegas or subway cars.

my research on Baldwin students. Taken together, these students' testimonials help to reveal the parallels between surveillance of youth in school spaces and private stores, public parks, subways, and particular neighborhoods. Finally one of the commonalities of all of my research participants is that they are self-identified writers. In addition to my observations, theorizing, and their testimonies from interviews and focus groups, their own writing is included as data in later chapters.

One of the important aspects of surveillance scholarship is that it recognizes the normalizing effect that increased monitoring and suspicion can have on our subjectivity. In this sense, daily encounters with metal detectors at the entrance of school are not only repressive. They also help to produce the person under watch (Butler, 1997; Vaz and Bruno, 2003). This concern for the impact of surveillance practice and policy on the bodies and minds of urban students is absolutely central to my research. This is where the perspective of my student research participants takes center stage. Their apprehension that surveillance creates, along with subversions student deploy in order to deflect its sting, help to reveal the extended injustices of surveillance policy. There is nothing trivial about a male security guard telling a student she must remove her underwire bra in order to enter school. Nor is it an innocuous fact that other students in other large public high schools do not have to undergo similar experiences every morning.

Urban students recognize that their experience with increasing amounts of school surveillance is similar to that deployed in stores, on subways, and in their own communities. Because it is so familiar to them, students tend acclimate to such monitoring rather quickly and with relatively little outward protest. Nevertheless, my

study reveals that this same familiarity often leads students to respond to school surveillance policy in surprising ways. I found that though responses to surveillance are sometimes masked in a kind of complicity, they are often better understood as forms of everyday resistance. Students' testimonies and writings reveal not only an awareness of injustice as it plays out through school policy, but also its sting. In turn, my study places their efforts of resistance in relation to a desire for recognition. While the practices, politics, and rhetoric of surveillance policy in schools may suggest a totalizing effect, my research reveals the ways in which students defy this consequence.

In summary, my dissertation uses surveillance as the lens to understand not only the implications of zero tolerance and increased policing, but also how policymakers justify these measures as part of urban educational reform. In this sense, a study of surveillance provides a wider lens through which to understand the criminalization and penalization of urban youth. While zero tolerance disciplinary measures may indirectly affect an entire student body, they are largely lobbied against a certain percentage of 'badly behaved' students. Studies have pointed to the ways in which the same profile of a student-type tend to be targeted by school disciplinary policies (Ferguson, 2001). Our assumption then becomes that students who are not caught are not affected. But when *every* student must pass through metal detectors each morning, *every* student is perceived to be a potential threat or criminal. Considering disciplinary school policies through the lens of surveillance points to the way in which these policies capture more students than they are intended to punish. The vast net of surveillance scoops up not just the big fish, but the small fish too.

An Overview of New York City School Surveillance Policies

The largest public education system in the country, New York City schools have seen their share of violent incidences.⁵ In 1992, during David Dinkins' tenure as Mayor, two teenagers were shot to death at point-blank range in the hallway of a Brooklyn high school (Donaldson, 1993). Since then, high crime schools have been the focus of intensive security and safety initiatives. That same year, the teacher's union counted 129 gun incidents -- a jump from forty-five the previous year (1990-1991). In early 1992, the school board installed weapons-scanning metal detector systems in the forty-one high schools with the highest number of violent incidents. Attending high schools that were deemed high-crime required that students enter through side entrances, wait to meet security guards or safety security officers, and pass through identity card machines, metal detectors and backpack scanners.

Mayor Giuliani's tenure as mayor, 1994-2002, became synonymous with the "broken windows" theory of crime prevention, which operates under the maxim that minor offenses left unaddressed will lead to more serious crime. By 1994 (the same year Giuliani was elected Mayor), the number of high schools with metal detectors had jumped to forty-seven. Also in 1994, the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and other 'zero tolerance' policies⁶ were being passed at the federal and state level in response to several incidents of school violence that had occurred across the country (Newman,

⁵ But tracking, much less controlling and reducing the number of incidents of violence in NYC Public Schools, has been and will continue to be a political issue. It has long been claimed that principals under-report incidences of violence in their schools for fear of tarnishing their schools reputation (Devine 1996, Dillon 1993). The teacher's union, by way of contrast, has been accused of encouraging its teachers to report every instance of violence.

⁶ 'Zero tolerance' policies accord mandatory sentencing and "three strikes and you're out" responses to every infraction, from the minor to the major.

2004).⁷ In 1998, the Mayor handed over the school security guard contract to the New York Police Department (NYPD). New security recruits were to be trained at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and would report directly to the NYPD, not to school authorities (see also Nolan, 2008).

The “broken windows” approach to school safety has led to serious problems. It fails to address root causes and instead takes aim at the appearance, or symptoms, of these problems. It holds that any sign of ‘visible disorder’ must be addressed or it will lead to more serious crime. Schools with populations over 3,000 regularly appear disordered. Coupled with a tangible fear of urban youth, authority considers urban schools as ‘visible disorder,’ especially those areas where youth congregate in large numbers. Instead of addressing over-crowding – the one issue that students, teachers, and principals consistently cite as the cause of school violence – “broken windows” approaches target non-criminal behavior as if it were criminal (for a lengthier discussion of this, see Nolan, 2008).⁸

In 2004 Mayor Bloomberg placed the NYC public schools under mayor control and introduced the Impact Schools initiative – a joint effort by the New York Police Department and the Department of Education. Together, these departments isolated the 22 middle and high schools with “higher than average number of criminal incidents, transfers of students due to safety violations, and what the Department of Education terms ‘early warning problems’ such as low school attendance and disorderly behavior”

⁷ Interestingly, incidences in which students brought weapons to school and gunned down teachers and other students took place in non-urban settings (such places as Oivehurst, California Goddard, Kansas to Grayson, Kentucky). The most famous of these incidents, occurred in 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

⁸ One example of this are the hallway “sweeps” between classes where students caught outside of class after the bell rings are literally “swept” away into detention – three of which invoke suspension.

(p. 2, Drum Major Institute/DMI). These schools, according to the Mayor's office, account for 13 percent of all the crime in the system. As such, they receive the bulk of security initiatives and dollars. The NYPD's "school safety task force" includes 200 uniformed officers (dedicated solely to Impact schools) and augmented scanning and security measures. This occurred in a much larger context—namely, the implementation of Federal Homeland Security surveillance programs in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York City. In 2004, the NYPD received \$6.25 million from the U.S. Department of Justice to implement these measures. Over three years, some schools have been replaced by others. The results are mixed: in January 2005, the city claimed that major crime was down 43 percent in a subset of the 16 high schools where the program had been implemented. Other schools, however, experienced an increase in crime while in the program (p. 3, DMI).

These initiatives have resulted in a profusion of security technologies: digital or analog video cameras; metal detectors, scanning wands, ID cards, Internet tracking, biometric fingerprinting and face recognition systems, transparent lockers and book bags, electronic gates, two-way radios. These technologies exist to various degrees (for various purposes, and with varying results) in top-tier, middle-tier, and lower-tier high schools. As of 2004, of the 1,300 city schools in New York City, only 155 had security cameras. That year, the city council approved the creation of the Department of Education's Internet Protocol Digital Video Surveillance (IPDVS) system which would install cameras in every public school. In addition to cameras, city council officials passed a bill to install metal detectors in *every* public school by 2006 and allocated \$120 million in the

5-year capital budget for new security cameras, which cost approximately \$75,000 per school to install (Winston, 2007; Bennett, 2004). The current number of schools with video cameras has yet to be reported. Whether they will be effective in reducing school crime is not yet clear. The Mayor's preliminary report on 2006 major crime in schools shows a twenty one percent jump. Most recently, in April 2006, Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein introduced the 'roving metal detector' initiative, otherwise known as random spot checks, at large and small middle and high public schools which did not already have permanently installed metal detectors. These unannounced checks were said to root out weapons and drugs before they enter into school buildings. As a consequence of this policy cell phones were banned by the Department of Education and security at the initial surprise visits confiscated hundreds of phones and music players for every box cutter or weapon they found. As several recent studies on New York City's policies as they relate to school security and safety serve to show, students in schools with intense security measures report feeling less safe, disrespected, and insulted (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Balmer, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; DMI, 2005; Noguera, 1995).

Theoretical Framework

Studying the specific role that surveillance and security practices and policies play inside the urban educational landscape means drawing together educational research and theoretical material far outside of the usual disciplinary domains of education. My study draws from this theory, ethnographic research and data collection, and reportage which details how public schools are becoming more prison-like not only in terms of

disciplinary policy, but also with regard to the cultural and symbolic features of prison to which students in large urban schools are now regularly exposed. An early incarnation of this position can be found in *Maximum Security* (1996), in which John Devine chronicles how student violence in New York City's public school system has become normalized. Devine argues that schools and school personnel ignore and evade student violence by unleashing a regime of technological surveillance devices from police to metal detectors. What is so challenging about this arrangement is that so few authority figures take responsibility for school arrangements such as the ones Devine notes. From a slightly different vantage point, surveillance scholar William G. Staples (2000) has argued that surveillance and social control programs of this type are rarely orchestrated by a few individuals or part of a master plan that is simply imposed on us from above. Rather, in his view, such programs grow out of a matrix of power relations that are intentional and unequal but "never simply one-directional" (3).

In the past, surveillance scholars argue, surveillance was personal, not necessarily systematic, and often inconsistent -- the watchful eyes of the shopkeeper may have deterred a would-be shoplifter in a small community where people watched one another very closely (Staples, 2000; Foucault, 1989; Simmel, 1964). By comparison, today's version of social control is systematic, methodical, and automatic in operation. It is impersonal in that the observer is often hidden, anonymous, and mechanical (might be a computer system, videocam, scanner). Post-modern social control, as Devine notes, involves our bodies in new and important ways. Surveillance is increasingly experienced as part of our everyday exposure to technologies of policing, convenience, and

protection.⁹ Our movements are tracked via the internet and credit card purchases; our images are recorded on hidden video cameras. The sum of both past and present forms of social control, as noted by Foucault, is that people are increasingly watched and their activities documented and classified in an effort to make them conform to social norms and expectations.

What we find when studying surveillance and security policies in New York City schools, the topic of which I explore in detail in chapters one and two, is the complicated relationship between criminal justice and surveillance. Whereas the former attempts to capture and punish the wrong-doer, the latter is motivated out of a need to prevent crime before it happens. School surveillance policy is ostensibly about prevention. However, as this dissertation will show, criminal justice and surveillance policy and discourse feed off each other and impact schools in alarming ways – ways that may shift the social control dynamics at play. What may appear as conformity, for instance, may in fact be functioning as resistance in the lives of students.

While New York City's 'lower-tier' high schools, where surveillance and security systems have been in effect since the early to mid 1990's, offer an obvious site for ethnographic examinations of surveillance; I found the students themselves to be ideal, if not challenging, subjects for such inquiry. Even though surveillance and social control scholarship is growing and is generally motivated by issues related to equity, fairness, and justice, very little of it attempts to unearth how these issues are experienced by real people. Not only does my research seek to shift the site of surveillance inquiry from the

⁹ In New York City, Mayor Giuliani installed thousands of hidden surveillance cameras across the city.

school to the student, it also focuses on *the responses* undertaken by those whom surveillance targets. By choosing to focus on those varied and tactical responses, I argue that we will learn more about the complexity of surveillance and social control practice and policy – where, when, and how it fails and succeeds. Even more importantly, we will learn about the ways in which students are resisting these policies and how we may help to support their resistance in productive and useful ways.

Although I utilize the concept of resistance, I understand that it is hotly contested amongst scholars. Anthropologists Michael Brown and Sherry Ortner problematize the ethnographic project of observing resistance and worry that, in our search for hopeful manifestations of contestation, scholars exhibit a myopic focus. They argue that this myopia tends to blind scholars from recognizing aspects of complicity with/to power. Their critique might best be understood in relation to the study of youth vernacular – studies of hip hop, tagging, and graffiti, for example, as sources of resistance to hegemony¹⁰. Studies of this kind, Brown and Ortner suggest, tend to over-interpret the working of resistance (Ortner, 2006). Ortner further claims that “Resistance studies are thin because they are ethnographically thin: “thin on politics, culture, and subjectivity” (62, 2006). She calls us to return to the idea of ‘agency’ by using meaning-driven approaches instead of power-driven approaches to cultural practices which are, for her,

¹⁰ The work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham in the 1970s (by Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Paul Willis, John Fiske, Angela McRobbie, Jenny Garber, Simon Frith, etc.) was seminal in bringing attention youth subcultures. Hebdige’s now-famous study of punk culture and counter-cultural style laid the groundwork for later studies on hip hop culture, tagging, and graffiti. Ethnographers of youth culture insist that style has become a way of unifying and targeting poor, youth of color: “ethnicity and social class reside less with skin color or dollars than they do with participation in various collective styles ... style becomes the medium through which social categories take on meaning” (175, Ferrell). Studies of style are a good example of how researchers observe ‘everyday’ forms of covert resistance; but they also represent the kind of ‘thin ethnographic’ studies that have come under attack for overinterpreting the working of resistance (Ortner, 1995).

“shallow and illuminating” because they emphasize “cultural/discursive/ideological effects” of power and lack interest in meanings and intentions.

While I generally agree with these concerns, those of us inside schools – or working closely with young people – recognize that youth are reacting to injustices, and are actively contesting all the time – even if they do not possess the language to articulate the intentions behind their dissent. In an era of punitive public policies and school reforms, when urban teenagers are already perceived as threatening and misbehaving and labeled as deviant and criminals, there is an urgent need to observe, document and reframe how they are actually responding to everyday injustices. As a researcher concerned with observing and theorizing the ‘meanings and intentions’ behind students’ actions, I have found Ortner’s notions of resistance very useful.

In addition to testifying eloquently about their own experiences, the youth with whom I worked and learned for over eight months of research were also insightful and articulate about strategic and conceptual issues surrounding surveillance. They were as adept at recognizing an undercover policeman, for instance, as they were at determining whether a video camera was being monitored by personnel or mounted only for show. Perhaps most significant was their capacity to understand the personal and structural implications of surveillance policy and practice. They responded not merely to the personal violence of feeling so heavily watched or of being harassed daily by security guards, but to the social violence that structural inequality and injustice represent.

In addition to my prior experience working with New York City teenagers and my focused research with approximately twenty youth of color, I read surveillance and social

control scholarship and a wide range of interdisciplinary theories including, among others, structuralists Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, John Devine, and David Garland. While I found their theories powerful and useful for understanding the larger context of discipline and social control in public schools, I often found that it was difficult to apply their theories to the personal agency I was witnessing among the students themselves. Sociologist Michael Burawoy (1991) suggests that locating oneself within a particular theoretical tradition is an attractive research strategy precisely because of the power behind such a tradition. But, he continues, participant observers often find they must *reconstruct* theory because they become committed to the actually existing complexities of those they study. This responsiveness to the participant is “often at odds with strong prior commitments to a particular theory” (27). Though my immersion in such a range of interdisciplinary theory shaped my thinking, I found that my commitment to the students’ voices and their strategies for resistance required a particular kind of theoretical nuance, openness, and generosity that both Michel De Certeau and James C. Scott offer a researcher interested in working with emergent, bottom up signs of resistance.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation includes five chapters, with an introduction, conclusion, and appendix. I have sought to organize the dissertation so that the first two chapters help to frame the topic of school surveillance and the last three chapters include the bulk of my data with my research participants. Because this study is a theoretical social analysis of

school surveillance policies and practices and their impact on middle-range youth, I theorize the material presented in each chapter.

In chapter one, I present an overview of the rise of surveillance policy in New York City public schools over the last two decades and situate these policies both as an extension of zero tolerance and in a national post-Columbine/post-911 context. I review several recent studies of New York City public school security policies (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Balmer, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; DMI, 2005; Noguera, 1995) and outline a series of assumptions underlying these policies. In examining the City's Impact program, I expose its mission as a bridge policy linking zero tolerance to surveillance. The Impact program is reflective of a wide ensemble of practices that aim not merely to discipline the urban student, but to control him or her. While the means of this control is through increased monitoring and high-tech security devices, I refer briefly to the Columbine incident and attempt to highlight the failure of such technologies to prevent school violence. I conclude by documenting the role of technology in advancing methods of social control in schools.

In chapter two, I begin by situating school surveillance policy within a social, economic, and political context. While surveillance and security policy ostensibly aims to *prevent* violence in schools and create safer environments, they often arise out of a sense of public panic and in concert with crime control policies. This public panic and punitive policy is often attached to urban young people, creating a 'generation of suspects'. Studies suggest that zero tolerance crime control policies evidence a clear bias against Black youth and other youth of color living in urban areas and negatively impact youth of

color in terms of school success. (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; ABA, 2001; Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2001; Brown, 2003, 2005). I conclude this chapter by suggesting that school surveillance policy is a misguided solution that targets the wrong problems and creates what I call the ‘net’ of surveillance. My analysis centers on how this net captures the kind of school and student featured in my research – the middle-tier high school and the middle-range student.¹¹

Chapter three takes the reader to Baldwin High School in the Bronx by providing an ethnographic portrait of the school today. The chapter offers a brief history of the school and refers to some of the ways it has changed since metal detectors were installed in September 2005. My analysis in this chapter is focused on showing how surveillance policy has been differently imposed across New York City’s public schools. To do this, I juxtapose Baldwin with its neighboring top-tier public high school, which I refer to as Darwin. The chapter elaborates on some of the obvious and hidden disparities between the two schools and situates these disparities in terms of a larger security agenda. I conclude by drawing upon data from my youth participants. I argue that their tacit awareness of race and gender are factors which complicate the experience of increasing surveillance.

Chapter four analyzes how students characterize, exploit, and resist some of the most problematic dynamics of school surveillance. While students are aware of the seeming powerlessness they face at the hands of security guards and surveillance technologies, they are also engaged in developing new ways to cope with, negotiate, and

¹¹ Later in this chapter, I discuss my decision to work with “middle-range” students and the way in which middle-range students offer educational researchers a glimpse at how increased policing and surveillance impacts not only the marginal student, but also the successful student.

tactically respond to these practices and injustices. This chapter argues that students are not passively succumbing to the programs of surveillance and security they face in their schools and communities, but are becoming more attuned to these programs and are navigating and responding in surprising and sometimes radical ways.

Chapter five concludes the dissertation and features the hip hop poetry club (Spoken Ink) which was founded by Baldwin students soon after the walkout. This chapter argues that writing, especially as part of an after-school poetry club, constitutes a unique form of youth resistance in response to the school's surveillance policies.

Drawing upon the notion of 'sousveillance' (which means 'to survey from below'), I theorize the role of the after-school poetry club as an example of a type of response that I call 'emergent participation'. I argue that the club and the students' writing not only attempts to displace the threat and sting of surveillance, but also offers a means for chronicling and monitoring institutional change. In this way, I argue, students use their own writing to 'survey from below'. Using James C. Scott's notion of a social site to address how the poetry club emerged as a safe space sealed off from authority, this chapter also draws from the work of Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Jennifer McCormick to elaborate on the role that writing plays in the lives of urban students.

Methods

A detailed description of my methodology and lines of analysis is included in the appendix; however, below I review the design of the study and the participants with whom I chose to work.

Research Design & Research Participants

Over the course of eight months (October 2005- August 2006), I conducted field research on the subject of school surveillance in New York City public schools. I located my research at one high school, although I worked with students who attended other high schools as well. My discovery of this school was through the widespread media attention it garnered over the student walkout. I became acquainted with a student who had invited me to participate in her after-school poetry club. The club was monitored by an English teacher, Mr. Greer. In addition to attending the club, Mr. Greer invited me to attend several of his classes; introduced me to his colleagues; and shared with me several stories about the school. Due to the walkout, the school's administration was sensitive to outsiders. My efforts to conduct formal research at the school went unacknowledged. Part of my decision to work 'under the radar' of school authority had to do with the subject of my research study. I wanted to learn what it was to walk into a high-security school as a white woman with no formal position or claims at authority. I wanted, in essence, to see what passing would mean for me. This meant that I entered the front door of the school as a visitor and was subject to metal detectors, scanning, and the harassment of security.

In addition to an extensive literature review and a review of relevant documents and current media, my primary means of data collection was ethnographic observation and participant interviewing of a purposeful sampling of twenty youth participants from Baldwin high school and those who attended Urban Word NYC. The students I chose to participate in my research are those who fall in the 'middle-range'. By middle-range I mean the student is fairly successful, but not necessarily upper-tracked. In terms of

schooling, the middle-range student tends to know how to avoid trouble, works fairly hard in classes, and is often neglected by the strong spotlight of punishment or surveillance. If we conceive of surveillance as a very powerful lamp that projects a glow much wider than its central focus, we can see that there exists a center and periphery. We might think of the students in the center of this spotlight as ‘the usual suspects’ and those at the periphery as ‘the AP students’. My research followed students who tended to exist in the middle – almost neglected by the spotlight but caught by it.

In locating my research participants, I borrowed from theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s usage of the “middle ranges of agency” as the place to look for “effectual creativity and change” (2003, 13). My decision to work with “middle-range” students stems from a desire to capture the ways that surveillance in schools affect not only the most vulnerable and marginalized students (i.e. those who skip class, wander the hallways, bring in contraband items, are more likely to be “pushed out” of school – those who tend to acquire the moniker of “trouble” students)¹², but also how these same practices impact students who are “doing right” by the system. For educators and activists whose focus are the factors that contribute to increasing drop out rates, push out practices, and the criminalization of youth, conducting research with middle-range students who hang in the balance (and often *just beyond* the grasp of punitive policy) helps inform our understanding of these factors. It also helps us identify avenues, Sedgwick points out, of ‘effectual creativity and change’.

Though their testimonies can be seen as representative of what and how other

¹² Kathleen Nolan’s research (forthcoming) with vulnerable and marginalized students’ and their experiences with zero tolerance policies and “push out” practices in a Bronx lower-tier urban public high school provides an alternate and equally important version of the impact/s of surveillance and security policies in schools.

middle-range youth of color experience school and community surveillance policy, these students were purposefully selected based on my knowledge of both sites, by interest in the subject of youth resistance, and the desire to understand the impact of school surveillance and policing on the average student (Cresswell,185). Over the course of several months, I conducted one-on-one interviews with all of the participants and focus groups with some of them. In addition to interviews and focus groups, I met and observed students in their various schools which gave me exposure to four different security protocols, and went with them on small outings which gave me some sense of what it was like to be watched by security in stores, subways, on the street, and/or in public squares. I also corresponded with students over email and frequently talked to them over the phone. Through the project, I recorded our conversations and took numerous photographs – some of which are included in later chapters.

My interviews generally lasted two hours. I was guided by a list of thirty questions, each broken into three sections: (1) being watched/experiences with surveillance; (2) being known; and (3) tactics of resistance. Almost always the interviews became conversational and informal and often moved further than the questions had predicted. I found students eager and willing to engage with me on the subject of surveillance; on being racially profiled and sexually harassed; on their sometimes painful, confusing episodes at the hands of security. I also found teachers at Baldwin to be helpful and willing to talk to me. Their observations helped to give me a historical view of things at the school and proved a useful counterpoint to what I was hearing from students.

Although I was mostly interested in how surveillance was experienced and perceived by

students, I found teacher anecdotes and perspectives to be balanced and insightful. I met also with youth organizers from Sistas & Brothas United and Urban Youth Collective. These activists helped to detail the long struggle to reform policing and security issues in public schools and gave me insider knowledge about what it was to try to work with school administrations and officials at the City's Department of Education.

Each of the participants was a self-identified writer or rapper. On many occasions, I attended events and open mics where they performed their writing. I also helped connect many of them to the writing community in New York City, as a means for offering institutional support for their writing. It became clear early on that the youth participants used writing as a means of expressing their outrage and frustration with school experiences. Their writing emerged as a *particular kind of response* to the highly monitored spaces of school (from school security metal detectors and scanners at the entrance and in the hallways, video surveillance cameras in the stairwells, to the constant presence of authority figures and peers in an overcrowded setting). I will argue that writing was chosen because these students lacked other outlets for verbal protest and felt so heavily watched.

In addition to their testimonials, I collected student writing. I found this writing to be a crucial source of data. It offered me significant additional insight into how students were experiencing the surveillance at school. The poems also provided data on the extenuating circumstances at play in the school, clues to the subtext of a complicated and chaotic institutional environment. The poems are especially useful tools for collecting 'on the ground' qualitative accounts of what was transpiring in these educational institutions,

and helped fill gaps overlooked by traditional research methods. Finally, on a methodological level, these student poems served as jumping off points from which in-depth interviews would follow. Their writing shows up in later chapters of this dissertation and I analyze it both as data and as a particular form of resistance to surveillance.¹³

¹³ Although not crafted formally as a participatory action research project (PAR), I drew significantly from the central themes of PAR methods. As noted by Torre and Fine (2005), PAR projects “typically center around issues of structural violence that intimately impact the lives of young people” (271), and recognizes that “marginalized/oppressed youth carry sharp critique” of the structural oppression they experience (272). With this in mind, I drew from PAR’s basic premise that “valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action” (271). My data is informed significantly by working *with* 20 youth participants. Their contributions as writers and thinkers often resulted in writing and performing **as** a form of action; in this way, I strived to reposition them as researchers in the various settings in which we worked, and not merely as subjects of my research.

Chapter 1 – *The Rise of Surveillance in Schools*

Background

Chapter one has two parts. In the first part, I present an overview of the rise of surveillance policy in New York City public schools over the last two decades and situate these policies both as an extension of zero tolerance and in a national post-Columbine/post-911 context. I review several recent studies of New York City public school security policies (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Balmer, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; DMI, 2005; Noguera, 1995) and outline a series of assumptions underlying these policies. By examining the City's Impact program, I highlight its function as a bridge policy that links zero tolerance to surveillance. The Impact program is reflective of a wide ensemble of practices that aims not merely to discipline the urban student, but to control him or her.

The second part of the chapter will explore the connection between everyday surveillance and social control. It will address the role of technology in advancing surveillance in schools, and conclude by documenting its role in moving the urban high school from a disciplinary to a control society. Doing so is essential not only for clarifying what we mean by surveillance as social control, but also for understanding the relationship between the underlying assumptions of school security policy, and the larger, more systematic operation of social control and discipline. Much of the means of this control is through increased monitoring and high-tech security devices such as increased security guards, cameras, and metal detectors; however, I refer briefly to the tragedy at

Columbine High School in 1999 in order to highlight the failure of technology to prevent school violence.

Part One

Assumptions of Surveillance Policy

In public schools across the country, students are encountering the effects of a variety of security measures designed to make schools safer. Students enter and exit their schools through metal detectors, scanning machines, and under the suspicious stares and booming shouts of security officials and police officers. On their way to classes, they move through hallways and stairwells (sometimes classrooms) mounted with surveillance cameras. From California to Florida, Washington to Maine, urban and suburban public school officials are following the lead of government policymakers and choosing to respond to issues related to student violence and school safety by deploying an array of surveilling techniques and technologies (Monahan, 2006a). New York City, home to more surveillance cameras per square foot than any other city in the world, leads the pack in developing and implementing school-based surveillance initiatives (Ruck et al, 2005; Boal, 1998). Ostensibly designed to improve school safety, the effects of the technologies and personnel required to implement surveillance are manifold -- many of which are counterproductive to safety, and, in some cases, actually foment violence. Instead of a greater sense of safety in and around school, along with an active and civically-minded sense of school community, students describe a feeling of danger and disillusion. Students in these schools experience firsthand what it is to be monitored, feared, contained, and harassed all in the name of safety and protection and are deeply aware that

the persistent advancement of surveillance measures inside their schools have ill-intended consequences and may indeed limit their ability to succeed in school and in society at large.

New York City's public schools: brief historical overview of its policing policies

Schools remain one of the safest places for young people to be. According to the U.S. Department of Education, rates of school crime and violence have been falling since the early 1990s (Monahan, 2006; Ziedenberg, Brooks, Schiraldi, 2000; Males, 1999). As was noted by the Justice Policy Institute's study entitled *School House Hype: Two Years Later*, "when students and school administrators talk about the safety of their schools, they might as well be speaking about different worlds" (Brooks, Schiraldi, Ziedenberg, JPI, 2000). They note the irony that "during a time when youth violence and violence in schools has been on the decline, parents are becoming more afraid for the safety of their children in schools. The relatively good news concerning the declining juvenile crime rate has been met by an expansion of security policies across the country" (2000).

Although it is difficult to extract the moment when school safety and security initiatives became the focus not only of the New York City's Department of Education (formerly the Board of Education), but also of City Council members, the Teacher's Union, parent and youth activist groups, and students, it is best to see the City's focus as paralleling those of the nation.

The New York City public school system enrolls approximately 1.1 million students in over 1,400 schools (U.S. DOE, 2003-4). 73.4% of the total population are

low-income and eligible for the free lunch program.¹⁴ The NYCLU reported that at least 93,411 students from at least 88 schools “must pass through permanent metal detectors to enter their school buildings each day” (9, 2007). As the largest school system in the country, New York City’s schools have experienced their share of violent incidences.¹⁵ One of the incidents to precipitate the use of intense security happened in 1992 during David Dinkins tenure as Mayor. Two teenagers were shot to death at point-blank range in the hallway of a Brooklyn high school (*NY Times*, February 27, 1992). That same year, the teacher’s union counted 129 gun incidents -- a jump from forty five the previous year (1990-1991). In early 1992 the school board installed weapons-scanning metal detector systems in the forty-one high schools with the highest number of violent incidents. For students in high schools that were deemed high-crime --schools that researcher John Devine characterizes as “lower-tier” high schools -- entering school required that students enter through side entrances, wait to meet security guards or safety security officers (SSO), and pass through identity card machines, metal detectors and backpack scanners. By 1994, the number of high schools with metal detectors had jumped to forty-seven.

That same year the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was mandated. This Act required that students involved in serious offenses such as having a weapon or committing serious acts of violence in schools be expelled or suspended. In general, zero tolerance policies accord mandatory sentencing and a “three strikes and you’re out” response to every infraction, from the minor to the major. As local school districts began

¹⁴ Demographically, the school system breaks down as follows: 38.4% Latino, 33.7% African American, 14.8% White, 12.7% Asian American, and 0.4% Native American.

¹⁵ Tracking, much less reducing the number of incidents of violence in NYC Public Schools, has been and will continue to be a political issue. It has long been claimed that principals under-report incidences of violence in their schools for fear of tarnishing their schools reputation (Devine 1996, Dillon 1993). The teacher’s union, by way of contrast, has been accused of encouraging its teachers to report every instance of violence.

implementing their own disciplinary policies, they expanded the scope of zero tolerance to include harsh punishment for all kinds of misbehaviors – school fights and altercations, even talking back to teachers (NESRI, 2007; Giroux, 2003; Dohrn, 2000). In *Maximum Security*, John Devine (1998) argues that one of the effects of zero tolerance is the retreat of teachers from the responsibility for school-wide discipline which produces a kind of vacuum that security guards fill not only by punishing students, but also by hanging out with students, developing personal relationships with them, and mentoring them.¹⁶ When teachers are removed from the disciplinary equation, Devine argues, students' disciplinary problems are either ignored altogether, or they are the subject of intensive policing, or inappropriate monitoring. A system of just punishment seems altogether lost in these spaces – and students recognize this (reviewed in chapter four). Not surprisingly, zero tolerance discipline policies have been found to disproportionately impact students of color from low-income communities. Ronnie Casella (2001) suggests that because these policies fail to account for the most vulnerable and marginalized students' needs, they often lead to higher rates of suspension, expulsion (pushout), and dropout.

Mayor Rudy Giuliani's tenure as mayor, 1994-2002, became synonymous with the "broken windows"¹⁷ theory of crime prevention which states that if minor offenses

¹⁶ Devine contends that the body of the student "becomes the province of the security guards while teachers abdicate this responsibility" (83). In his rendering, school policies which turn over the teacher's role of disciplining students to security guards (and, increasingly technology) also have the effect of "fragmenting students' identities by establishing a sharp boundary between their bodies ... and their subjectivities" (84). In many instances, students told me of witnessing security guards or school aids doing favors for certain students and harassing others.

¹⁷ The theory famously introduced by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in an article entitled *Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety*, which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* in March 1982. The Broken Windows prescription is the shift in police focus from major crimes themselves to what might once have been called nuisances--litter, public drunkenness, panhandling, teenagers. In quelling small disruptions of street life, we snuff crime before it begins. In a study entitled *Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy*, Felton Earls and his co-authors Robert Sampson and Stephen Raudenbush put forth the concept of collective efficacy, "defined as social cohesion among neighbors and their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good." This study directly contradicted Dr. Wilson's notions and showed that the connection between disorder and crime, long the subject of furious debate with little real evidence on either side, appears to have been invalidated. Community presence, rather, is what deters crime.

aren't addressed they will lead to more serious crime.¹⁸ A "broken windows" approach to school disciplinary issues also refuses to address root causes and instead takes aim at the appearance of problems. It holds that any sign of 'visible disorder' must be addressed or it will lead to more serious crime. Under Giuliani, the city's police force and procedures gained greater authority. Enforcing law and order in the streets often meant using oppressive, somewhat gratuitous, tactics. Communities of color were especially alienated by these methods for cleaning up the streets, and in eight years of working with youth of color in New York City, I found many to be disparaging of police – distrustful, fearful, and angry.

The NYPD takeover of school security

By 1996, Giuliani's investigatory commission concluded that the BOE's Division of School Safety was ineffective and poorly managed, and that the NYPD should play a greater role in ensuring safety in and around schools. Educators, community leaders, parents, and students vigorously debated a plan to turn school security over to the city's police department, but ultimately their voices and protests were not enough and in fall 1998, the BOE voted unanimously to "transfer control of school safety to the NYPD" (8, NYCLU). This meant that the NYPD, not the BOE, became responsible for training,

¹⁸ In an interview on the Academy of Achievement in 2006, former Mayor Giuliani was asked: To what do you attribute the drastic cut in serious, violent crime? His response follows: "The drastic cut in crime in New York City -- which continued after crime started going up in other cities -- has to do with two principal things and then a lot of other things. One is the "Broken Windows" theory. You've got to pay attention to everything, and you can't give criminals a sense of immunity. The second is the COMSTAT program, the computer program that measures crime every single day in every single part of the city, pin-maps it, plots it, and gives you real hard data on which you can make decisions about your law enforcement strategies. So every day, you can look at where crime is going up, where crime is going down, and assign your police not based on some kind of a hunch or guess, but based on the fact that crime is going up in this part of the city, and this is where we have to put our police officers, and these are the kinds of police officers that we need to do it, because you need different kinds of police officers based on different kinds of crimes. In one part of the city, you can have auto theft going up. You need a certain kind of policing and a certain kind of police officer to reduce that. In another part of the city, you could have thefts of office buildings. You need a different kind of police officer, you need a different kind of policing, and you need the help of the security people in the buildings. But by having these accurate statistics and keeping after them very intensely, you get to see these trends right away, and then you can take action to stop it before it gets out of control." (<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/giu0int-1>)

recruiting, managing, and employing 3,200 school safety personnel. As such, the roles and responsibilities of School Safety Agents (SSA)¹⁹ were expanded. “They became responsible for monitoring school entrances, exits and hallways; operating ID scanners, cameras, and metal detectors; checking student and staff identification; and coordinating with precinct officers when appropriate. They retained the power of arrest” (8, NYCLU).

During this time, the same “broken windows” approach that was being applied to the streets seemed to be similarly invoked by security in schools. Schools with populations over 3,000 regularly appear disordered; and when students congregate in large (or small) numbers, they represent ‘visible disorder’ for authority. Instead of addressing over-crowding – the seeming root cause of school disorder (and the cause that students, teachers, and principals most often cite as the cause of school violence) – a “broken windows” approach seeks policies and procedures which control and contain the most minor signs of disorder and, inevitably, targets non-criminal behaviors as if they were criminal (for a lengthier discussion of this, see Nolan, 2007). One example of a broken windows-influenced procedure might be found in what is often referred to as “hallway sweeps.” Sweeps are by now a common school order maintenance practice in large middle and high schools. Between classes, security guards and deans go through the hallways and “sweep” students. If students are caught outside of class after the bell rings, they are taken into detention. Regardless of what they are doing, a student caught in a sweep three times is suspended. So a student on her way to class, but late, is treated

¹⁹ SSA are employees of the New York Police Department (NYPD), but receive minimal training, and are responsible for school security both inside and outside the building. They are under the authority of the NYPD so they do not report to the principal or the assistant principal. The SSA are those who monitor the metal detectors/scanners and, though they don’t carry guns, Rhina tells me, “they can arrest any one at any time including students and teachers, on duty and off duty.” They are distinguished from the regular Security Guards by a three-striped shoulder patch. They are the lowest ranked officers of the NYPD, “the Riker’s-hired officers,” states Elizabeth, “they’re crazy – they think that we’re the criminals. And that’s how we’re treated.”

exactly the same as a student hanging out in the bathroom with her girlfriends, intentionally skipping class.

But perhaps more significant than the methods used by security to maintain order is the sheer presence of police personnel on school campuses. After the takeover by the NYPD, schools began to see a major increase in the numbers of School Safety Agents (SSAs) and armed police. The NYCLU report indicates that New York City has more SSAs than any other school district in the country – in the 2005-2006 school years, there were 4,625 SSAs and 200 NYPD on campus. NYPD’s School Safety Division is the tenth largest police force in the country (larger than, for example, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Detroit, Las Vegas); “in fact, New York City has more SSAs per student than other cities have police officers per citizen,” the report decries. And police presence alone is a significant factor in the number of arrests to which students are subjected. Research has found that with an increase in police presence comes an elevation in arrests that lead to an increase in the rates of incarceration for youth of color, especially African-Americans (see Fine et al, 2003; Ruck et al, 2005; Poe-Yamagata and Jones, 2000). In their study of the U.S. juvenile justice system, Poe-Yamagata and Jones (2000) found that, in addition to having a higher percentage of arrest rates (relative to their representation in the general population), 58% of youth who end up in adult prisons are African American. This research showed that of the Black youth who are arrested, over half of them end up in adult prisons.

Impact Schools: a “get tough” policy

In 2001, Giuliani's controversial policy, which gave the NYPD full control over school safety, was up for renewal. And while a majority of principals stated that safety had not improved under the NYPD, the lack of another official policy meant that the old rules would remain in tact and educators would remain largely out of the discussion. In 2001, newly elected Mayor Bloomberg took control of the schools by eliminating the BOE and 32 community school boards, and creating a centralized Department of Education (DOE). This move to consolidate authority through the Mayor's office is crucial to understanding the rise of surveillance as a governing principle in New York City's school safety and security policy.²⁰

In 2004 Mayor Bloomberg introduced the Impact Schools initiative²¹ – a joint effort by the New York Police Department and the Department of Education. No parents, students, community leaders, or educators were consulted. This initiative transferred even more authority over school safety to the NYPD, doubling the number of police officers assigned. Together, the departments isolated the 22 middle and high schools with “higher than average number of criminal incidents, transfers of students due to safety violations, and what the Department of Education terms ‘early warning problems’ such as low school attendance and disorderly behavior” (p. 2, Drum Major Institute, 2005). These schools, according to the Mayor's office, account for 13 percent of all the crime in the system. But these schools have other things in common as well: their student body is

²⁰ The NYC's Department of Education houses the Office of School and Youth Development, which exists “to ensure the integrated and consistent approach to safety, security and improved outcomes for students by facilitating a coordinated team approach at the school, ISC's and central administrative levels” (NYCNET website). The School Safety Division is under the control of the NYPD and exists “to provide a safe environment, conducive to learning, where students and faculty can be free from hostility and disruptions which could negatively impact on the educational process” (same website). This division is in Long Island City (Queens), NY.

²¹ On August 22, 2007, *The New York Times* reported New York State's 27 ‘persistently dangerous’ schools under NCLB. Although all but two of these schools are located in New York City, only two of the nine city schools Mayor Bloomberg placed on the Impact schools list (Medina).

disproportionately comprised of poor and Black students; have more over-age students for their grade level; were larger and more overcrowded than the average city high school; and received less funding per student for direct services (DMI).

The NYPD's "school safety task force" includes 200 uniformed and armed officers (dedicated solely to Impact schools) and augments scanning and security measures. "The initiative doubles the number of police officers permanently assigned to targeted schools; institutes a zero-tolerance policy for infractions listed in the New York City Discipline Code²²; and expedites the removal of students via suspension procedures" (9, NYCLU). As an adaptation to the NYPD's "Operation Spotlight" program, the new measures quickened the suspension process and lengthened their duration. Students in these schools "who have been suspended more than twice in two years are singled out as 'spotlight students' and subject to a three-strikes-you're-out policy that removed them from the school immediately upon the fourth offense, even if a minor offense" (2-3, DMI). In addition to police and SSAs, Impact schools would soon subject their students to a range of security technologies as well: digital or analog video cameras; metal detectors, scanning wands, ID cards, Internet tracking, biometric fingerprinting and face recognition systems, transparent lockers and book bags, electronic gates, two-way radios. In 2004, it received \$6.25 million from the U.S. Department of Justice to implement these measures.

Of growing concern about this and other school policing initiatives is the lack of transparency with which the DOE and the NYPD not only impose safety regulations, but

²² See appendix for 2007 Discipline Code issued by the Chancellor's office. Also found: <http://docs.nycenet.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-101/Disc%20Code%202006.pdf>

also with which they share with the public criminal and non-criminal incidents in schools. Though community groups, students and teachers, and activist organizations, like the Urban Youth Collective, have initiated letter campaigns, large demonstrations and protests, and a students' Bill of Rights in an effort to get DOE officials to seriously consider their concerns about school safety personnel and technology, it was not until the city council finally passed a law (over the Mayor's veto) that this happened. The city council brokered a law that required the NYPD to "submit quarterly reports detailing the number of SSAs assigned to every public school" (9).

The results of the Impact initiative are less than encouraging. In January 2005, the city claimed that major crime had been down 43 percent in a subset of the 16 high schools where the program was originally implemented. Other schools, however, saw an increase in crime while in the program (p. 3, DMI). NCSC found however that the DOE's numbers reporting a decline at Impact schools were not statistically significant compared to the decline in crime figures in other high schools (Phenix, 2006). What did decline significantly, according to this study, was student attendance. This turn might suggest, however, that students were being encouraged to dropout, or pushed out of these schools altogether. Even though strong attendance correlates with academic success, attendance at Impact schools decreased 4.2% as compared to 2.6% at non-Impact schools. Drawing an unfortunate but not surprising conclusion, NCSC states that "given the fact that the Impact Schools enroll significantly higher percentages of African American students than other New York City high schools, the Impact Schools program is sending a dangerous message about who the City is or is not willing to educate" (10, 2006).

Currently, the city's 26 Impact schools receive the bulk of security personnel, technology, and dollars, but 21% of New York City's middle and high schools have permanent metal detectors – that includes 88 schools and 93,411 students (NYCLU, 2007). And surveillance technology exists to varying degrees in almost every high school in New York City -- top-tier, middle-tier, and lower-tier high schools. Some schools, for instance, have only ID tracking systems; other schools have cameras and metal detectors. In 2004, only 155 schools had security cameras. That year, City Council passed a bill to install surveillance cameras and metal detectors in *every* public school by 2006 and allocated \$120 million in the 5-year capital budget for new security cameras, which cost approximately \$75,000 per school to install (Bennett, 2004).

Roving metal detectors

Versions of school security and surveillance exist in almost every public school in New York City. The Impact schools represent the most targeted of these schools, but they represent only one third of those serried with permanent metal detectors. In close to 88 schools, students encounter metal detectors and police and SSAs every day. Baldwin is one of these 88 high schools. In April 2006, Mayor Bloomberg's and the DOE's Chancellor Klein initiated the 'roving metal detector' policy. This policy targets the remaining schools in the city's system. These "random checks", as students call them, can happen at any middle or high school. They can also occur without warning. Designed ostensibly to root out weapons and drugs by surprising students upon their entrance into schools in the morning, this policy requires that every student be prepared at a moment's notice to go through a metal detector before entering school. In order for

the policy to work, the Department of Education was forced to ban all cell phones from schools—for they too set off the metal detectors. According to Bloomberg and Klein, these phones were being used by students to organize ‘gang meetings’ and cheat on tests. As soon as this wide net was implemented, the program drew the ire of parents and community leaders alike – not only because it banned cell phones from being brought to schools, but also because it brought to light the role that schools were playing in controlling and policing students without due cause. On any given morning, a school with little or no history of violence could transform into heavily policed headquarters in which students were subjected to a barrage of police and their cars and vans, SSAs and portable metal detectors, and long lines waiting to pass the scanners and get to class.

A recent *New York Times* article reported that a recent random raid of 900 students at Middle School 54 on the Upper West Side turned up “404 cell phones, 69 iPods, 23 other electronic devices, two knives and one imitation gun” (Bosman, June 1, 2007). If this random sample accurately dovetails with current research, unannounced sweeps have mostly netted cell phones. This turn infuriated parents, who believed that the phones provide a lifeline between themselves and their children. But the outrage over the ‘roving metal detector’ policy (also known as random checks, sweeps, or the cell phone ban) was also related to civil liberties and human rights. The National Center for Schools and Communities (NCSC) issued a straw poll and found that parental respondents felt that these policies “treated their children like criminals” (4, NCSC). Not only was such a program costly for the city’s school system²³, but it was so for the

²³ NYCLU reports that “in the fiscal year 2006-2007, which followed the mayor’s announcement, the city’s budget allocation for school safety equipment alone jumped 139 percent” (9, 2007).

schools and their students. One student interviewed in the *Times*' article about the sweep at Middle School 54 confessed that she felt "like [she] lost something very important to [her]" (Bosman, 2007). The article concludes with an image of the principal refusing to speak, standing on the stairs at the end of the day, shaking her head.

School Safety Policy: Assumptions and Tensions

Planet Surveillance, a small company based in the San Bernadino Mountains outside of Los Angeles, CA, sells its security equipment by invoking suspicion and assuring protection. In an assuring tone, the company's advertising copy states "Sure, it would be nice to think that you can trust your employees, your nanny, your spouse or your children, but that's not always the case. Unfortunately at times it is those who are closest to us that need to be watched with Surveillance Equipment most vigorously. Nannies, spouses, neighbors, children, are often culprits in crimes such as theft that occur in homes."²⁴ Hoping to "nourish our society's retributive impulses," as David Garland might contend, Planet Surveillance feeds our fear of being harmed and offers the solution to prevent that from happening.

At the macro level, a similar campaign informs New York City's school safety policies. Underlying these policies are several assumptions. One is that urban schools are inherently violent. Research has shown that high schools in all areas of the U.S. are at risk for experiencing school violence. Elementary and middle schools in suburban and rural areas fare better than their counterparts in urban areas. But high schools across the country are equally at risk (U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, 2004).

²⁴ (<http://www.planetsurveillance.com/>)

The issue of safety is one that no educator can afford to ignore. Research links violence in schools with an increase in disruptive behavior, poor attendance, academic failure, and an overall stressful school setting (Miller, 2003). Over the course of seven years in and out of New York City middle and high schools, I can attest to seeing huge, sprawling fights in hallways. I have witnessed students forcefully removed from school in handcuffs, listened to stories about stabbings and murders, and seen the fear some students experience at the prospect of going to school because of a perceived lack of safety. I have colleagues who have been spat on by students and taught new teachers who have been aggressively pushed or violently cursed at by students in front of their classes. It is clear to me that students and teachers who feel unsafe and afraid in school are less likely to learn and acquire the skills necessary to succeed. But it is also clear to me that surveillance systems and police presence do not ensure a reduction in violence or a greater sense of safety.

Isolated instances of spectacular school violence, widely reported in the local media, often provide the fulcrum for justifying and implementing policies across an entire school system. Yet little evidence suggests that these policies are successful in reducing violence at all, let alone in the spectacular context in which they were engendered. At the risk of over-simplifying a complicated set of issues, I want to suggest that examples of spectacular school violence tend to provoke a kind of hysteria that feels out of proportion to a culture that has become acclimated to seeing violent imagery (and imaginary violence) at every turn. Our national media seems to be obsessed with school crime – especially school shootings or threats of shootings. It is important to note that

though these displays of school violence are horrific and terrifying, they are extremely rare. Sociologist Mike Males (1999) refers to these shootings as “rage killings” and argues that crimes of this nature by youth closely resemble “rage killings” by adults – “all involve males, none poor, nearly all white, nearly all wielding guns (or, more rarely, bombs), nearly all motivated by generalized rage” (57). Though *adult* males commit the majority of “rage killings”, media pundits and politicians focus their concern (and panic) on *juvenile* crimes of this nature. Males has found that the rate of violent juvenile crime consistently declined whereas adult rates have consistently increased (67). But since the issue of juvenile crime and school violence are topics the public generally unites around, politicians exploit the issue to great effect.

Current violence prevention strategies are based on the assumption that individual students cause the problems. They become the target of punitive zero tolerance policies and may ultimately be removed from a classroom or school. Casella (2001) notes that adults working in schools must take also responsibility for their role in causing the conditions that lead to school violence. Noguera (1995) argues that punitive school violence prevention that targets individual students has served to create a prison-like environment that actually worsens the problem. Although Noguera suggests that security staff who have a relationship with a school and its students can be beneficial, this line is slippery. Several studies have shown that partnerships between police and schools have the potential to cause more harm than good because they undermine the authority of school personnel (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI, 2007; Hyman and Perone, 1998; Devine, 1995). A review of recent studies and reports reveal the problems associated with

punitive violence prevention methods and the potential of these problems to exacerbate issues in schools (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Balmer, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; DMI, 2005; Mayer and Leone, 1999; Noguera, 1995).

While few would question the need for safer school environments, it is important to recognize the politics surrounding the insistent cry for more security. “In such panics,” warn Ruck et al (2006), “it is not unusual for a nation to construct technologies of surveillance ... [whereby] youth of color attract a disproportionate share of the watching, the ‘catching,’ the arresting and serving time” (4). They add that “national anxieties typically attach to youth; moral panics have long targeted youth as the source of national troubles in part because our “concerns over crime, sexuality and education focus on the ‘failures’ of youth” (4, 2006). This moral panic and deep ambivalence about adolescence has long existed (Maira and Soep, 2005; Cohen, 1972), and both the media and politicians tend to forward the idea that schools are spaces in which these ‘failures’ fester.

But, in fact, schools tend to be some of the safest places for youth and adults (ACLU, 2001; CDC, 1996). Compared to national crime statistics, very few crimes happen in schools; but because these stories play well on local news media, we hear about them more regularly. In *The Scapegoat Generation: America's War on Adolescents* (1996), Males’ close analysis of police reports, school surveys, and the Department of Education’s findings throughout the 1990’s reveals that crime in schools had not grown significantly over the last two decades. A 1998 Department of Education survey of 1,200

schools found that only one in five middle and high schools reported even one serious crime such as a rape or a robbery during the 1996-97 school year (65).

A second assumption is that school security and surveillance programs improve safety. In the wake of high profile school homicides, for instance, the National Institute of Justice issued a guide for schools and law enforcement agencies titled, *The Appropriate and Effective Use of Security Technologies in U.S. Schools* (Greene/NIJ, 1999). Chapters include video surveillance, metal detection, entry-control technologies, and duress alarm devices. Each chapter addresses the costs, instructions, maintenance, and working with vendors. While deploying surveillance and security technologies may be the quickest, most efficient, and cheapest way of addressing issues of school violence, they cannot address or even attempt to address any of the underlying issues causing such violence. Technology can only superficially monitor and report these issues, and, they often stand as “flashpoints” where tension often arises between students and security guards (NESRI, 2007, NYCLU, 2007). An over-reliance on surveillance technologies can cause problems in schools. But the other issue is that it fails to prevent crime. Despite Mayor Bloomberg’s administration’s exaggeration of the reduction of school crime after the Impact program was put into effect in 2005, their own data showed that major crime increased in schools by 21% from July through October 2006 compared with the same period in 2005 (NYCLU, 2007; Gootman, 2007). Metal detectors helped confiscate hundreds of iPods, cell phones, and school supplies classified as dangerous. But they did not prevent major crime such as theft of property or violence. From July through October 2006, New York City public schools saw a rise in these crimes (Gootman, 2007).

In 2001, four years after the takeover, the Joint Committee on School Safety surveyed principals to assess whether safety had improved under the NYPD leadership. 67% stated that “there had been no change in their school’s climate of safety’ since the NYPD gained control of school safety” (8, NYCLU). Although No Child Left Behind attempted to improve school safety by forcing several local and state education officials to develop state-by-state criteria for identifying persistently dangerous schools, school officials refused to report on their state’s schools. In fact, forty-eight states reported that *no* schools in their state fulfilled these criteria; only 61 total schools across the country were reported as dangerous. Twenty-eight of these were in Pennsylvania (I have not found NYC reporting on this). The Vera Institute of Justice, a policy think-tank in New York City, conducted a review of NCLB’s effort to improve safety and reported that state school officials felt that developing state-by-state criteria without federal standards was problematic; that reporting practices such as recording the number of incidents differed from state to state, and school to school; and that there are too many drawbacks to labeling a school as persistently dangerous. One of the major drawbacks was that the federal government offered minimal financial support to track these statistics, no incentive for reporting them, and demanded full compliance and access to this information. It is not surprising that so few states initially reported issues of lack of school safety. What would improvement look like?

The effectiveness of punitive policies such as zero tolerance or the installation of police officers and surveillance technology on school campuses is relatively unknown (Hyman & Perone, 1998). In her review of the relationship between student attendance

and school violence, Sharon Balmer (2006) found only two studies measuring the effectiveness of using police officers to prevent violence in a school (Johnson, 1999; Jackson, 2002). One study found that having a uniformed officer on campus reduced suspensions; the other found that their presence did not change the way students viewed actually committing a crime or how they perceived getting caught. Pedro Noguera has studied the important role that security guards and police officers can play in a school if they are given proper training and have a desire to work with kids. Interestingly, in a study that found a reduction of suspensions, officers expressed an interest in working with youth and were placed in schools located in their own communities (Balmer, 2006).

One final assumption is that school security and technology does not need to be evaluated or held accountable to those subjected to them. The NYCLU's report (2007) stated that no effective mechanisms were in place to hold SSAs accountable for their inappropriate or abusive behavior and issued very clear recommendations about over-policing in New York City's schools. Drawing upon evidence and studies which indicate that metal detectors are not effective in making schools safe or keeping out weapons, the report makes clear the need for evaluative mechanisms before and after the installation of surveillance systems in schools. Unfortunately, there exist no annual evaluations on the success or failure of these systems to do what they say they are there to do: keep students safe. The DOE's logic seems to suggest that because urban schools are unsafe and security and surveillance *theoretically* improve safety, we do not need to monitor or evaluate these systems. I have tried to offer evidence that contrasts the assumptions which drive this logic. Although school security policies continue to

proliferate in districts across the country, little, if any, evidence exists to corroborate these assumptions. The same logic seems to apply to the use of surveillance systems in general -- if a little is good, a lot will be better.

Additionally, the DOE has so far helped to shield “policing in schools from public scrutiny” (27, 2007). SSAs, who are part of the NYPD’s School Safety Division, do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Civilian Complaint Review Board, an independent board that deals with complaints against regular officers. If a parent or a student wants to file a complaint against a security guard on campus, they must deal with the Internal Affairs Unit which is often faulted for a lack of transparency and slowness to act (Winston, 2007), and are given a phone number to call for the School Safety Division headquarters and, after waiting on hold for a minimum of twenty minutes, would be redirected to the borough office that covers that school. An officer records or investigates only “high-level” violations.

In other words, advocates on behalf of youth who have been harassed or mistreated by security are given the runaround. After being held up by security one morning, one student, Rhina, decided to file a complaint. She stated:

During metal detector check you have to put your arms out – airport status. This lady wasn’t doing her job. She was like wandering me and things and she started talking to her friend like ‘yeah, girl, dadadada...’ and I’m trying to get to class. I’ve got physics first period, you know, I’m trying to do my work and she’s like ... not even paying attention. And I stood there for a good two minutes more than I had to and, like, two minutes doesn’t sounds like a lot but ... once the bell rings, you’re late. So I went to the security office downstairs and I filled out a report and I talked to the guy and he seemed understanding and everything, but he wasn’t. I found out they lost my report cuz I brought my mother in the next day ... and my mother was like ... can I see a copy of my daughter’s report and they could not find it (1, Interview).

Months later, after she had become much savvier about the system, Rhina approached the Sergeant in charge of the entire security operation at Baldwin. She learned several things from the sergeant, including the fact that several of SSA officers were abusing their rights or, as the Sergeant put it, “not doing their job” when they asked students to lower their pants in front of an administrator or remove their boots and put them through the scanner. Although Rhina had been told that ‘everything that’s allowed at the airport is allowed here’ by one SSA, the Sergeant confirmed that that was not in fact true. She told her that the “airport is different than school. it’s optional to take off your Tims [Timberland boots].” When Rhina asked the Sergeant whether she knew these violations were occurring regularly at the metal detectors, she said that she’d only heard about one other complaint from a student.

Rhina’s story exposes the ‘runaround’ that occurs when students, parents, and advocates attempt to complain about the manifest failure of these policies. There is virtually no one on the other end of the complaint – and if they are there, they exhibit very little authority to effect any change based on the complaint. Students at Baldwin noted that most of the problems with security was its failure to do its job properly. Rhina told me that she has “the most problem [with security] when things *aren’t* getting watched. Because at school, they don’t watch us. They don’t watch us. They’re just there.”

In order for school security systems and policies to be evaluated, a system of accountability needs to be in place. But when in 1998 Giuliani first put the New York

City Police Department in charge of school safety and security, he not only initiated a major shift in who implemented security; he also removed the accountability system. No longer were students accountable to school staff such as counselors, deans, or assistant principals, but to the police and security guards assigned to the school. If there was an altercation between a student and a security guard, there were now no mechanisms for reporting this. The issue of accountability has become a major problem in schools²⁵ largely because it engendered a system with an accountability vacuum-- at the macro and micro level.

Public school systems have always to some degree suffered from a lack of accountability – with multiple, deceptive levels of authority. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has created an aggressive accountability system, but fewer individuals have control and can take responsibility for what is wrong or needs changing in a school. Fernando Carlo, an organizer with Sistas and Brothas United (SBU), a Bronx-based organization that monitors the activity of local schools and seeks to support students’ rights, told me this:

It’s beginning to be clear that the communication and the structure of accountability within the DOE – like they’re always pointing fingers at each other – and it’s really, it’s unclear to everybody, in all honesty, cuz it’s always like the principals and the local administration is always like ‘well, it’s up in the City’ and the DOE people are like, ‘well, it’s back down in the administration and the local level’ ... I think in the last couple of months, a lot of the organizations that have been working on these high school issues – specifically with the metal detectors, the security, and the cops – they’ve gotten to the point where they can have monthly meetings with the DOE and have gotten permission, and gotten those people to send letters to the principals like ‘meet with this person/organization and start having conversation.’ So now we can go meet the principals and the

²⁵ One now-famous example of this problem was a popular Bronx high school principal’s arrest and subsequent dismissal for intervening in an altercation between a student and a security guard.

*principals can then tell us what's really going on in the schools and we can use that to talk back to the people within the DOE. It's just like the process is so long and while it's happening, there still is the metal detectors and all this stuff*²⁶ (3, Interview).

Although groups like SBU, and those who work through Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) are doing what they can to triangulate between the Department of Education and the school administrators, they are neither empowered, trained, nor equipped to do so. And, as Carlo indicates, while the triangulation is happening, students remain exposed to metal detectors in their schools. Sadly, this lack of accountability and the vague lines of authority they engender has helped produce an atmosphere in which students learn how to avoid and evade security and figure out that the rules they are expected to follow are not consistently imposed. These policies seem to rely on a 'more is better' logic, but fail to account for the fact that more surveillance does not correlate to more safety (NYCLU, 2007). In these respects, students note the failure of surveillance -- on some days they will "get caught for going to the bathroom without a hall pass" and on other days they will not. In a setting where they are subjected to 'the presence of an absence' of authority, students are as equally encouraged to follow the rules as they are to break them.

One of the contributing, but often overlooked, factors related to accountability is the ubiquity of surveillance technology in schools across the country. For example, in schools throughout Biloxi, Mississippi, teachers voted to install cameras inside their

²⁶ Esteban, a student at Baldwin and a member of SBU added this: "I was just thinking that's what makes SBU's struggle and every other youth group (that much) greater. because the DOE doesn't really know who has power -- I bet they do -- but they're not really you know helping us directly. So I think what they're thinking is that with time, people are gonna get used to the metal detectors and things are going to calm down. But such groups as SBU, they keep on working to fight for youth voice and stuff like that. they don't really believe that the metal detectors are working ... and I don't believe the metal detectors are working."

classrooms. Although teachers stated that they felt the presence of cameras “not as an invasion but as a protection,” suggesting moreover that they needed to be protected from their students, with over 500 classrooms readily equipped to watch a teacher’s and student’s every move. The Biloxi example points to an acquiescence on the part of educators to submit their classrooms, their practices, and their students to surveillance systems that ultimately fail to do much but stand in for real authority. For them, cameras are almost invisible: “there’s an acceptance because we’re all used to being watched by cameras anyway, whenever we go to the grocery store or to pump gas or visit an A.T.M.” (Dillon, 2003). In a high school in Lebanon, Oregon (a county with only one high school, one middle school, and six elementary schools), students are subject to 25 cameras around the building. The district’s director of technology services, Brian Bray, states that “we use video technology to further support accountability” and applauds the system because the cameras can “provide powerful evidence” against guilty students (70 students were arrested during the school year). No longer in need of security staff except for one policeman monitoring 1,380 students at the high school, Bray concludes, that “this system makes all of us security staff” (Semple, 2005). Most recently, at Samuel J. Tilden High School in Brooklyn, NY, one student running late for class, was held up by a SSA, pepper-sprayed, pushed into a wall, handcuffed, and “suspended for four days and faces five criminal charges, including for disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.” Surveillance cameras captured this incident, but when the mother went to the school and requested to review footage of her son’s arrest, not only did school staff deny her permission, she

noted that they also edited the raw footage, altering even the timestamp” (Winston, 2007).

The issue of surveillance cameras in schools will be taken up more fully later in the next section. Nevertheless, these examples do help to show how technology can take the place of a school administration’s ability (or desire) to monitor students and their safety. Although many of us are used to being captured on camera many times throughout the day, it is a mistake to suggest that these surveillance systems are somehow neutral and transparent conduits for the maintenance of public safety. Cameras mounted in the Biloxi classrooms (where teachers are already present) exist, it seems, to reassure teachers of their authority inside the classroom. They ensure a level of accountability because they record evidence and data that might support one person’s word against another. But they also exist as a panoptic force inside a school. Students, teachers, and staff alike are well aware of where the cameras are mounted, and where they are not; but virtually no one inside a school knows who watches the recorded footage, where it is stored, and how it can be accessed. While surveillance technology such as cameras may appear more neutral and objective than actual security guards and police officers, they also help to stretch accountability and create the mirage of personal vigilance.

Summarizing and contesting assumptions

In the previous section, I outlined three assumptions that inform New York City’s school safety policies. They are, **firstly**, that urban schools are inherently violent; **secondly**, that school security and surveillance programs *improve* safety; and, **thirdly**, that school security and technology do not need to be actively evaluated or held

accountable to those subjected to them. I have marked some of the problems underlying these assumptions. Because surveillance policies are so prevalent, it is difficult to find groups or organizations actively contesting them. One of the few organizations that has tried to hold the Department of Education and other political and civic stakeholders accountable for some of the issues contributing to unsafe schools is the Urban Youth Collective (UYC)²⁷, an organization that brings New York City youth together to fight for change through local and citywide organizing strategies. For several years, UYC and its member organizations have helped to organize students from across the city in protests, a ‘Safety with Dignity’ petition, and postcard and letter-writing campaigns. Rather than just complain about issues, students involved with the organization seek to work with policymakers and key stakeholders, and put forth reform ideas and agendas in order to do so.

Frustrated with Mayor Bloomberg’s reforms, UYC sought to hold a series of meetings with Chancellor Klein. When Klein’s office “failed to acknowledge the meeting request, youth organizers staged a widely covered press event outside the DOE’s Tweed offices” (18, Mediratta). Klein finally acquiesced. One of the most telling examples of how the city’s policymakers deal with accountability was explained to me by Amy Cohen, the Executive Director of UYC. In a phone interview conducted towards the end of my research, Amy described the meeting with Klein. About 20 youth from UYC organized and ran the meeting with the Chancellor. They enumerated personal examples of when they or their peers had been mistreated or disrespected by security. Klein’s basic

²⁷ One of the tenets of UYC’s *Proposed Bill of Rights* states that “all students have a right to attend school in a safe, secure, non-threatening and respectful learning environment in which they are free from verbal and physical harassment, as well as from intrusions into their bodily space and belongings by school safety agents, police officers, administrators and teachers” (UYC, 2006).

rejoinder after each example was “robot-like”, she told me. He kept repeating that “acts of violence are not going to happen on my watch.” Students were taken aback by his unwillingness to engage with the facts of their personal experiences. He elaborated that at one recent high school sweep, metal detectors had confiscated “seven or eight weapons” and that those seven or eight weapons were worth all the trouble, harassment, disrespect to which these students were referring. Towards the end of our phone interview, Amy recounted what she said was one of the “most poignant” moments of the meeting. Exasperated at Klein’s double-talk and evasion, a student finally spoke up and referred to the tragedy at Columbine. He noted that after what had happened at Columbine, the students got grief counselors. But in New York City, where nothing had happened, the students got security measures. Why? Chancellor Klein refused to respond.

Klein’s insistence that “acts of violence are not going to happen on [his] watch” underscores the significance of an event that probably most influenced school safety regulations across the country, particularly in New York. Between school years 1997-8 and 1998-9, there was a 40% decline in school-associated violent deaths. With roughly 52 million students enrolled in the country’s public schools, this means that last year, there was a one in two million chance of being killed in a school (Bureau of Justice Statistics/BJS, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics/NCES, 2000; Centers for Disease Control/CDC, 1999). At the same time, the number of Americans who were fearful of their schools rose nearly 50% during this same period. Even after well-publicized studies reported school crime to be on the decline, more than 60% of Americans said school safety “worried them a great deal” more than seven months after

Columbine. Across the country, parents and school boards continue to call for more metal detectors, surveillance cameras, locker searches and student identification badges, even as students say they feel less safe and report more crime in schools that use these "secure" school procedures.

Part Two

Surveillance as social control

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault argues that the panoptic effect of surveillance is its ability to discipline our every move without explicit domination. Even before modern-day technology, Foucault argued that modernized bureaucracies and architecture functioned as social control. His most famous exploration of the disciplinary power of surveillance was with the design of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. In Foucault's imagining, Bentham's 1791 blueprint of a prison served as the perfect model for understanding the role that surveillance plays in disciplining and controlling our everyday behaviors. This circular prison design -- with a central watchtower and illuminated cells -- produces a chilling, "panoptic" effect upon those housed within it. Knowing they could be watched at all times, but never quite sure whether a guard was present in the tower or not, prisoners began to watch themselves *as if* they were being watched by authority. In other words, they began to self-monitor themselves by "internalizing the gaze" of the prison guard. When we internalize the gaze of authority, we conform -- no longer acting out of our own desires or self-interest, but out of those who hold greater power than we do. For Foucault, the internalized gaze of authority

represents power reduced to its penultimate form. To make the soul suffer, argues Foucault, this is the logic of power.

Social control, from a Foucauldian standpoint, tends to be cited as an “absence of force” (Cohen, 1985: 221).²⁸ The Panopticon design epitomizes the social disciplines of modern life in which clean and rational forms of social control and punishment were introduced. According to Foucault, the major effect of the Panopticon is

to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they themselves are the bearers (201, 1977).

This passage is frequently invoked by theorists of social control because it asserts that while power often cannot be located, it is active in controlling human behavior. “The basic logic of the Panopticon operates to maintain normality among the already normal” (349, Hannah). Anyone who falls outside of societal norms is punished – either by himself, his peers, or by authority. Because the subject is “the principle of his own subjection” (202, Foucault), social control works by conforming the subject to a regime of normality according to race, class, gender, sexuality and age. Power, in the form of surveillance, has the potential not only to repress, but also to produce the subject (Butler, 2004; Vaz and Bruno, 2003).

The difficulty with a purely Foucauldian reading of surveillance is that it often reduces the outcome of increased surveillance upon a given subject to the motive behind

²⁸ The ‘absence of force’ does not represent the logic of crime control and criminal justice. Therein are a series of actors and government agencies -- police forces, courts and prisons, elected officials, legal agencies, and deviant populations.

imposing it. In other words, it conflates motive with outcome. In “Social Control after Foucault” (2003), Michael Lianos argues that for this reason the study of social control has not progressed very much. He insists that because “theoretical ‘BigBrotherism’ undoubtedly seduces us as much with its simplicity and its capacity to mark our thoughts, as with its interpretation of control and domination” it is hard to mark the limits of seeing “contemporary control as part of a larger scheme of socio-political domination or hegemony” (418). While institutional control is embedded in the development of the institution, this does not mean that its organization is built on control. Lianos writes: “we must stop looking at the purpose and the consequences of institutional control as a prolongation of subjection” (423); instead we should consider “the criterion for deciding what belongs or not to the sphere of control is neither the consciousness of the subject or the group involved, nor the will of those who produce the ‘controlling’ effect in question, but mainly the conditions that shape the interaction between those two parties” (416). What Lianos wants is for researchers studying dominant institutions *to split* motive from outcome: “one can examine the causes and the results of diverse contexts and devices of control by analyzing their specificity, without feeling obliged to have recourse to a centralized explanation, which is by the same token reductionist” (424).

I include Lianos’ concerns here because they serve to complicate our understanding of the New York Department of Education’s motives for implementing surveillance and security policy in the City’s public schools. While DOE officials and school administrators insist that these policies are concerned solely with protecting students, the outcomes of these policies on those most directly impacted – ie. students

and teachers -- suggest otherwise. Lianos' work reminds us of the importance of studying student responses to these policies – which is the primary focus of the second half of this dissertation.

The use of technology as social control

Contemporary surveillance scholars often assert that technology has allowed for the deployment of panoptic structures throughout society. Surveillance cameras in public spaces are an example of a technology that brings the gaze of authority into our daily lives. Although one can find several modern-day reincarnations of Bentham's panoptic guard tower inside an over-policed, urban high school, video surveillance cameras are perhaps the most obvious version of this.²⁹ Mounted in the hallways and stairwells of

²⁹ New York City began installing metal detectors, scanners, and security guards in a few middle and high schools in the early 1990's, during David Dinkins' tenure as mayor and at a time of high crime in the City and in schools. But since Columbine, and with the introduction of New York State's Project SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Law), both urban and suburban districts across the state were required to expand their emergency procedures. With the help of Federal dollars from the Justice Department, public school districts have ramped up their security efforts – using the funding to install metal detectors, locks, increased lighting, ID tracking systems, and police officers. But, more than any other device, schools in almost every state in the country – from Minnesota to Ohio to upstate New York to North Dakota to Oregon to New Jersey to Florida to California – have turned to video surveillance cameras as the primary tool for promoting safety. In 2004, New York City's City Council passed into a law almost unanimously the creation of the Department of Education's new Internet Protocol Digital Video Surveillance (IPDVS) system. This system was intended to reduce violence and act as a tool for law enforcement. This bill which allocated \$120 million dollars over five years for camera installation became Local Law 52. On this system, cameras are linked by a network to a server in each school. Video is watched live by school safety agents from a main console. According to the bill, both live and archived video must be available – live footage is watched by SSAs and all camera footage is accessible by the Department of Education in Manhattan and stored for 50 days. As of April 2007, 163 schools have been installed with IPDVS and another 59 are currently being equipped; large schools like Baldwin can have up to 96 cameras.²⁹

The dependence on cameras is ironic, considering their spectacular failure to protect students in Columbine. And yet, schools and classrooms are quickly becoming spaces where students can expect to be monitored inside and outside of campus. With the use of digital video technology, images are easy to store, recall, and view. In real time, however, images are not easy to watch for an extended period. Surveillance researchers have found that it is difficult to concentrate on video monitors for more than twenty minutes at a time (*Chronicle of Higher Education*). And because they are only one tool in the apparatus of security, cameras are often the initial purchase towards a larger, more comprehensive security and surveillance program; or they are introduced in combination with other things, such as more policing or metal detectors. Another concern is that once school administrators introduce one form of surveillance into their school, they also become the target of the security and surveillance industry – an industry that promotes itself aggressively through fear and paranoia and has become, since 9-11, the economy's fastest growing sector (Homeland Security Research Corporation, 2005).

Surveillance technology is advancing rapidly. While expensive, state-of-the-art cameras can, through behavioral analysis, identify erratic behavior or if people are where they shouldn't be, they cannot respond to an assault.²⁹ Although proponents of video cameras in schools state that cameras have a deterrent effect on students and that they go to insuring safe learning environments and decreased property damage, no evidence exists to support these claims. The lack of oversight on whether or not these technologies are working to reduce violence is troubling. Although the 2004 bill issuing cameras in schools called for the DOE to submit a report to City Council by 2006, the Council has yet to receive it because "the police have yet to sign off on the report" (Winston, 2007). But the Mayor's 2007 Management Report pointed to a 21% jump in major and minor school crime in 2006 as compared to 2005, revealing that cameras and other surveillance systems in schools are not doing the job they were intended to do, and quite possible altering school environments in such a way that they are no longer conducive to learning. State senator Bill Perkins is critical of video surveillance in schools because of its racial dimension. He was quoted in *City Limits Weekly* stating that "there is a

many New York City high schools, cameras occupy a strange place in a building housing thousands of constantly moving bodies. Students at Baldwin are well aware of where the cameras in their school are, but they are equally convinced that no one is actively watching the monitors, and have no knowledge even of where the monitors are in the school. Students might move out of view of the camera, for instance, but they have no idea whether or not someone is actually standing by, watching the monitors.³⁰ It is the monitors that play the more important role because they come to believe that the footage is being (or might be) recorded. No longer are one or few persons doing the surveilling of many. In schools today, where surveillance technology and personnel are prevalent, the feeling is one in which everyone is watching each other (while at the same time, everyone is trying to avert the gaze). Thus, the kind of surveillance happening in schools today is less akin to Foucault's panopticon model – *one watching many* -- and more similar to what legal scholar Jeffrey Rosen, in his book *The Naked Crowd* (2004), refers to as “the omnipiticon” -- in which *the many are watching the many*. There is a lingering a feeling

racist tinge to this as far as I'm concerned – the vast majority of kids they are surveilling in this way are children of color and low income. We, as democracy and a city especially, step across the line only when it comes to certain elements of our constituency” (Winston, 2007). In fact, the City's Impact Schools and nine other large high schools, with large African-American and Latino populations, were top priority to receive cameras, along with metal detectors and heavy police presence.

In addition to schools, New York City itself is equipped with more surveillance cameras per square foot than any other city in the country.²⁹ However little *if any* evidence exists that says video surveillance actually makes us and our environments safer. In fact, the ACLU found that cameras do not significantly impact the crime rate. The most comprehensive studies have been done in Britain where there are over 4 million cameras and the average person is caught on camera over 300 times a day. “There, a comprehensive study of 13 jurisdictions showed that cameras were ineffective in reducing crime or fear of crime” (Home Office Research Study, 2005). A University of Cincinnati study (2000) concluded that cameras have a “short-term deterrent effect, which likely would increase when the public is notified about their presence” (Cella, 2006).

Surveillance scholar Torin Monahan (2007) contends that relative to the “astronomical crime rates in the United States ... one is hard pressed to find *any* independent evaluations of video surveillance in the country” (5) and if studies are conducted, little is revealed to the public.²⁹ *The Washington Post* reported that surveillance cameras put in place to reduce city crime “have shown limited success in decreasing violent crime in other cities” (Cella, August 13, 2006). Several reports have found that police and security abuse surveillance systems – ogling women or disproportionately targeting people of color (Norris/ACLU). And although studies have shown that cameras simply tend to push criminals into unmonitored corners, cities across the country continue to authorize the use of police cameras. In schools, the explicit installation of numerous police and security guards, along with technologies such as metal detectors, scanners, cameras, and ID tracking devices, represents the ultimate inter-penetration of surveillance and control. This also represents the blurring of public and private interests addressed in the next chapter.

³⁰ One student, Jason, who attended a small Catholic all-boys school in Manhattan, found a camera in his locker and got them removed. He drew a distinction between cameras in his “private space” and in the hallways of the school. I will return to Jason's story later in the dissertation.

among students that they are watched, but they know not where the euphemistic ‘guard tower’ stands.

But one of the other features of technology and its insert into schools is that it has the potential to hide, perhaps even sterilize, one of the defining purposes of surveillance: to control students through pervasive monitoring (or the feeling of pervasive monitoring). We have come to expect that video cameras, metal detectors, RFID tags, biometric fingerprinting systems are neutral and objective -- discrete tools used to achieve the direct aim of a given policy. Reporters Jeffrey Rosen and Robert O’Harrow similarly contend that technological developments are dramatically enhancing the ability of government and the private sector to collect, store, analyze, and disseminate information about all Americans. Personal identity information is being stored and perhaps sorted. The anonymous are rendered more visible: “anonymous bodies can be transformed into digital subjects, identified and linked to their digital persona in electronic databases” (278, Norris, 2002). Surveillance scholar Gary T. Marx finds that Americans readily submit to a range of “soft surveillance” techniques for the sake of good citizenship or patriotism. These techniques include offering up personal information with credit card companies, on web sites, using bank cards. He emphasizes what he terms “surveillance creep” as the “displacement of brutally invasive methods by a series of new and expanding demands for personal information” (Monaghan, 2006). Other scholars argue that the use of technology in all settings makes it difficult to recognize the ways in which technology produces, shapes, and significantly alters social relations. By failing to see the connection between technology and ourselves, we may also stand to fail to understand the

ways technological systems operate as *generators* of social worlds. Researcher Torin Monahan (2006) reminds us that technology does not stand outside of the social world; nor is it neutral or objective. It is capable of altering social relations. It represents a method of social control that is often the hardest to detect. Managing space even while camouflaged within it, such technology discretely works to control us.

Schools illustrate how technology alters social relations, manages space, and controls student behavior. For instance, Local Law 52 will insure that every New York City public school will receive the ‘benefits’ of video technology. Visibility and invisibility are central to understanding how surveillance interfaces with control. On one side, the Panoptic subject is unaware of who is watching. On the other hand, the architecture of video surveillance, to take one example, renders its subjects more visible while the forces behind it become less and less visible. But what often gets lost in surveillance scholarship interested in the role of technology as a form of social control are the ways in which subjects act and feel in response to these technologies. The students in my research are, for the most part, willing to be captured on camera. But they are equally suspicious and aware of what this means for them.

Dean, a Dominican-Columbian youth and former student at Newtown High School in Queens, expresses a slightly altered version. Once such technology is in place, he says, “you can’t breathe as freely. You already have this conscious[ness] that you’re being watched, so you know you’re being watched. So that’s even worse than a hidden camera kinda thing, cuz there are probably hidden cameras everywhere. But sometimes, yeah, I think it would be better to not know you’re being watched.”

The complexity of Dean's sentiments helps situate the role that technology plays in school surveillance strategies. No matter what tactic a student chooses to use in response to a camera, he or she is certainly aware of the camera and, to some degree, his or her agency is determined by it. But it is not enough to say that students are *unaware* or simply ignore cameras in their midst. For youth of color, who are used to being watched in multiple environments, they are aware of cameras, but are able to distance themselves as the subject of those cameras (what would it want with me?). When examining spaces of asymmetrical power relations, we cannot afford to ignore the ways technology re-instantiates inequities, re-inscribes students' hyper-awareness of being watched, and, as will be described in later chapters, exacerbates harassment by security guards. Students who are turned away at the entrance of school because their bra wire won't clear the metal detector or who are suspended from school due to hallway altercations that get recorded and edited on film understand that technology adds an important dimension to surveillance. In its ability to alter social behavior in less obvious ways, technology can play an important and chilling role in buttressing zero tolerance policies that impact urban students of color most significantly.

In summary, policymakers' dependence on cameras for safety is ironic, considering their spectacular failure to protect students in Columbine. And yet, schools and classrooms are quickly becoming spaces where students can expect to be monitored inside and outside of campus. With the use of digital video technology, images are easy to store, recall, and view. In real time, however, images are not easy to watch for an extended period. Surveillance researchers have found that it is difficult to concentrate on

video monitors for more than twenty minutes at a time (Monaghan, 2006). And because they are only one tool in the apparatus of security, cameras are often the initial purchase towards a larger, more comprehensive security and surveillance program; or they are introduced in combination with other things, such as more policing or metal detectors. Another concern is that once school administrators introduce one form of surveillance into their school, they also become the target of the security and surveillance industry – an industry that promotes itself aggressively through fear and paranoia and has become, since 9-11, the economy’s fastest growing sector (Homeland Security Research Corporation, 2005).

Columbine: a key moment in surveillance

In April 1999, students and staff at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado learned firsthand of the failure of surveillance to prevent school violence. Well-equipped with video surveillance cameras and an on-site security guard, two students – Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold -- had no trouble walking into the school bearing shotguns, a rifle, a handgun, and homemade bombs and killing themselves and thirteen other people (CNN 2000). Despite the protests of parents and school officials, major television networks chose to broadcast the now-infamous footage of the Columbine shootings. Although psychologists suggest that Harris and Klebold were two very different personality-types, a psychopath and depressive respectively, and held different motives for planning “the massacre”, they both exhibited signs of distress prior to the shootings. In a 1999 FBI-sponsored study of 14 schools, including Columbine, that were involved in shootings by students from 1998 to 2000, The National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime at

Quantico, Virginia found that “students involved in school shootings often signal what they're about to do, and educators must be prepared to know when and how to intervene ... the path toward violence is an evolutionary one, with signposts along the way” (Report Summary, CNN News, September 2000).



Although neither Columbine’s video surveillance system, nor its on-site security guard, was sufficient to keep students safe, the lingering images of the tragedy – *made possible by the surveillance system designed to protect students* -- seems to play a far greater role in policymaking than the violence prevention research and education summits. Since Columbine, school districts across the country have lobbied for more money to spend on security systems and surveillance technology – a trend bolstered by Homeland Security efforts since 9-11 (National Institute of Justice funding). However, no evidence exists to suggest that the combination of security officers and surveillance technology actually works to reduce violence in schools. In order to provide safety, video

surveillance would need to be able to apprehend perpetrators before a crime is committed. Studies on youth and school violence since Columbine suggest that preventing violence in schools means detecting the warning signs of it early – something that exceeds the capabilities of technology and poorly-trained police or security in schools.

The Center for the Prevention of Violence, a resource center and think tank established in 1993 as one of the nation's first state school safety centers, explains that the most successful programs are those that are “student focused -- programs [that] recognize the important roles that students play in addressing the problems which exist in their own schools” (www.ncdjdp.org/cpsv/aboutcenter.htm). Among the 1999 FBI report’s conclusions were that, “school administrators and teachers need to assess the extent to which the classroom environment may contribute to a student's decision to carry out violence at school”; that “schools must determine whether they do enough to prevent or punish disrespectful behavior and whether bullying is part of the school culture”; and “that schools must guard against inequitable discipline, adopting an official or unofficial pecking order among students, allowing a student ‘code of silence’ and allowing unsupervised Internet access.” Counter to the logic informing the Impact school initiatives, the FBI report suggests that, “expelling a student for making a threat ... may actually exacerbate the danger.”³¹ The solutions that the data on school violence go on to suggest are internal not external to a school environment. The best defense against violence in schools is a combination of prevention and intervention strategies involving

³¹ (edition.cnn.com/2000/US/09/06/fbi.violence.report/)

the full spectrum of agents within the school. Baldwin students testify to this. Jessica noted after a year of metal detectors on her campus, that “you can’t stop violence by getting rid of the weapons, you have to stop violence through education and if they’re not teaching us, you know, how to approach an event like you’re caught in a fight, like different ways to react to violence other than, you know, what our nature might tell us to do, you’re not going to stop it, you’re not going to control it.” Christine, who attends an Impact high school in the Bronx, similarly noted that, “there’s always going to be a way where they can try to like jump the system... I know somebody’s going to find a way to bring something in without no one knowing even though there’s cops, there’s metal detectors, there’s wandering down, there’s everything.”

Ultimately, the Columbine incident stands as an important reminder of the fact that surveillance systems, no matter how elegantly conceived, are by no means full proof. But even though eight years have passed between the horrific event and today, the passage of time does not ease the fears of school administrators or parents that their child’s school might become the next Columbine. Although school shootings have been a crisis in America's white suburban or rural communities, they have informed urban school policies, from zero tolerance to school surveillance and security measures, where low-income youth of color bear the brunt. African American and Latino children are suspended from school at several times the rate of white students, risking the fate of dropping out permanently and becoming entangled in the court and criminal justice system. Students testify that *the combination* of security guards with metal detectors and scanners is the dynamic responsible for increasing tensions between students and their

school environment. The NYCLU report refers to student interactions with metal detectors or cameras as “flashpoints” – police interventions that create opportunities for confrontations and divert students and teachers from class time (7, 2007). In the hands of authority, cameras and other surveillance devices, consolidate power in the hands of a few authority figures. Several studies suggest that the larger threat comes, not from school shootings, but from efforts to turn schools into funnels for the juvenile justice system (Nolan, 2007; NYCLU, 2007; NESRI, 2007; JPI, 2000; Noguera, 1995; Dorhn, 2000).

Moving from a disciplinary to a control society

For Foucault, surveillance is central to social analysis and should be placed in the broader context of discipline -- not merely within bureaucratic organizations, but in society as a whole. Surveillance and discipline are one and the same. In *Discipline and Punish*, he argues that modern society is a ‘disciplinary society’ in which strategies of power are always present. Though institutions such as military, prisons, factories, and schools may be the sites that initially spawn disciplinary power, their influence informs the texture of social life. Foucault’s version of surveillance contends that, in modern societies, people are increasingly watched and their activities documented and classified in an effort to make them conform to social norms and expectations.

Systematic surveillance emerged in the nineteenth century with the growth of the military, industrial towns and cities, government administration, and capitalist enterprise. In the context of early factories, surveillance took the form of close monitoring of workers to ensure their compliance and productivity. From there, the bureaucratic

tendencies of modern organizations (bookkeeping, written protocols, hierarchy of salaried officials, etc.) required that administrators collect and record personal data on workers, staff, families. The collecting and maintaining of personal information of those in subordinate positions by those in positions of authority not only compromises the subordinate's privacy, it also ensures the authority's power.

With the introduction of technology into modern life, however, philosopher Gilles Deleuze argues in *Postscript on Control Societies* (1990) that, “we’re in the midst of a general breakdown of all sites of confinement – prisons, hospitals, factories, schools, the family” (178). Businesses take over from factories in the control society. “Factories formed individuals into a body of men for the joint convenience of a management,” Deleuze writes, “.... but businesses are constantly introducing an inexorable rivalry presented as healthy competition, a wonderful motivation that sets individuals against one another and sets itself up in each of them, dividing each within himself” (179). School, family, army, and factory are no longer analogous sites but different sites “converging in an owner” (the state or private). These sites are, in stark Deleuzian terms, “coded configurations of a single business where the only people left are administrators” (181). Educational reforms, he argues, represent the last efforts at maintaining some semblance of the discipline society – they are attempts at “nursing [those attached to the old system] through their death throes and *keeping people busy until the new forces knocking at the door take over.*”³² He suggests that the “surest way of turning education into a business”

³² Educational reformers and activists certainly know what Deleuze means by this. Those advocating for change in schools invest in long battles with many contending variables and political power sources – i.e. Finance equity, small schools, police in schools, scripted curriculum, etc. Deleuze does not suggest that advocates give up fighting for these things. He does say that we need to be careful about what initially appear as new or better freedoms. That these can soon contribute to “mechanisms of control as rigorous as the harshest confinement” and that we shouldn’t worry or hope for the “best” but that we need to concentrate on “finding new

is by replacing school with “continuing education” and exams with “continuous assessment” (179). Indeed, control societies are marked by not ever finishing anything or what he calls “endless postponement.”³³

Schools represent an institution experiencing the breakdown of the disciplinary society and the emergence of the control society. As part of the everyday routine of schooling, the integration of technology that is capable of greater, more effective surveillance helps illuminate the passage of school from being a site of discipline to a site of control. The control society advances with technology; today we see surveillance and security proliferate in schools through technology. Whereas in a disciplinary society each member has a signature and a number which holds their place in the mass, members of the control society gain access by way of codes and passwords: “the digital language of control is made up of codes indicating whether access to some information should be allowed or denied” (180). Students cannot move in the hallways without having their program card. They are tracked in high or low courses based on their test scores. Upon entrance, they pass through metal detectors and their school ID is run through a computerized system. In some high schools, teachers and staff must “clock in” by placing their hand under biometric fingerprinting systems. Although biometric security systems

weapons” (178). By this, I take him to mean that resistance is not about overturning a particular regime or reform, but focused on its own project. Often this project is the design of new weapons in response to a particular dominating force, but as this dissertation will go to show, the most powerful response to school-based surveillance emerged when students focused on “weapons” that exceeded the gaze of authority. Often, when we think of resistance, we think it must be a direct response to something or someone. Deleuze suggests otherwise. The rhizome insists there are multiple entry and exit points.

³³ I think we can see this in education today. Although there is an end to high school, students often lose sight of it and struggle to make it there. Students with high school degrees must strive for the next degree if they are to compete in the marketplace. Although we are told that school has a finality, the necessity that we continue to advance our status by acquiring more education is made plain. Janice Bloom’s dissertation argues that urban youth of color suffer the hardest fate in terms of acquiring a degree that will counter the effect of social class. An interesting inversion of this concept of “endless postponement” of education is dropping out, GED programs, prison education, etc. Might we see the circling in and out of these programs as an astute response to being endlessly postponed by the system itself. A ‘what’s the rush’ kind of attitude? For those who drop out or are pushed out of high school, their belief in the attainment of a GED often requires a feat not only of perseverance, but also of fantasy (Tuck).

are costly, and generally used in the private sector, they are being tried out in school districts across the country (Monahan, 2006b).

With the advancement of surveillance technology in school and society, we are also witnessing the role that language plays in navigating the control society. Although Deleuze contends that the language of the control society is digital, my research reveals that schools and those within them exploit multiple languages which involve codes and passwords, but are not merely digital; nor are they merely a set of numbers that unlock a secret passageway. The linguistic concept of ‘code-switching’ taken up by Geneva Smitherman (1986) and Lisa Delpit (1995) in which students of color learn how to transgress the laws of social class by learning the rules and precepts of that class (i.e. jettisoning street lingo for ‘proper grammar’ talk, etc.) is a helpful reminder that codes aren’t merely numbers, but ways of being. School has always functioned as a site for teaching the ‘ways of being’ most aligned with the dominant class values and cultural conduct.³⁴ In heavily surveilled spaces like schools, passwords are embedded into the fabric of the social space and relations. Students talk to each other in coded language; they graffiti personal messages to one another on desks from class to class. Walk down the hallway of a high school and several languages are being spoken. Those who have access to the most of these languages are generally the most popular students. Between students and security guards, passwords unlock the ability to move freely through the school’s hallways or sneak in an MP3 player. Passwords change too. For this reason, we must modify, improvise, and adapt. Deleuze writes, “control man undulates, moving

³⁴ See Bourdieu for a much lengthier discussion of this.

among a continuous range of different orbits” (180). In schools, we witness a continuous scene of negotiation between authority and students. New passwords are required; students invariably invent and learn them once again.

Conclusion

Ultimately, school surveillance is best understood as occurring within a landscape of competing and intersecting societal forces. I have tried to show that policies of control are and have been slowly taking over schools. However regimes of discipline still linger inside these spaces. Students must enter and navigate school using a series of passwords. In many instances, however, once inside their classrooms, they are subjected to a scripted curriculum, standardized tests, and teachers who remain isolated from the daily experiences of their students. Whereas a Foucauldian approach traces modern day surveillance back to the birth of the prison and the Panopticon, a Deleuzian approach draws its metaphorical power to the concept of the rhizome. The rhizome, that horizontal stem of a plant (usually but not always found underground) that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes, suggests that power has no definable hierarchy. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) use the rhizome to characterize research and theory that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in interpreting and representing what is being studied.³⁵ At this juncture in New York City public schools, after almost twenty years of increasing surveillance practice and technology, a rhizomatic approach to the

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) used the term "rhizome" to describe theory and research that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they opposed it to an arborescent conception of knowledge, which worked with dualist categories and binary choices. A rhizome works with horizontal and trans-species connections, while an arborescent model works with vertical and linear connections. Their use of the "orchid and the wasp" was taken from the biological concept of mutualism, in which two different species interact together to form a multiplicity (i.e. a unity that is multiple in itself). Horizontal gene transfer would also be a good illustration.

study of surveillance is not interested in locating the origin of the guard tower, but instead reminds us of the ubiquity and multiple layers of power and surveillance on a given environment.³⁶ (And the difference in Deleuze's thought does not stop there. If power admits of multiple layers and non-hierarchical organization, so too might resistance and its tactics.)

Though metal detectors can be traced to companies and policies can be traced to the NYPD, the current landscape of control and surveillance operating in large urban schools is ever-shifting. Multiple surveillance is at work in these spaces. And within this ever-shifting context of surveillance and domination, multiple forms of resistance emerge. Thus the study of surveillance is not only the story of domination and control; it is also the story of resistance. The results of which are often surprising, maybe even radical. Indeed our students are subjected to dizzying, contradictory and often threatening gazes of power – at once disciplined by metal detectors and video cameras, controlled by information technology, video monitors, and standardized test scores. But as this dissertation will show, students are also participants and producers of power within the context of school; the multiple forms of their resistance to surveillance emerges from *within*, not outside, this constantly shifting terrain. My study seeks to illuminate the forms that student resistance takes as it emerges from within these spaces (and within the slippage between a disciplinary and control society) so that those of us outside these spaces – researchers, activists, and after-school educators alike -- may learn how better to

³⁶ The importance of this is for future research and activism. As Fernando Carlo's statement earlier attests, confronting DOE and school administrators is like being involved in a game of tag – with no one willing to play 'it'. In chapter five and six, I will refer to activism that is dispersed. Deleuze's concept of the rhizome helps to frame dispersed activism and is often cited by those studying social activist projects.

support our students as they seek to cope with these forces while remaining inside these spaces.

Chapter Two – *The Politics of Surveillance & the Surveillance Net*

Situating surveillance

While chapter one addressed the rise of school safety and surveillance policy in New York City, this chapter attempts to give a brief overview of the wider, neoliberal policy context out of which contemporary school surveillance policy has emerged. Because policies aimed towards urban school reform are often generated in a morass of heightened fear and moral panic, they are often *ad hoc* in nature. Rarely—if ever—designed to address the larger economic, political, and social conditions faced by poor and working-class youth of color, their effects can be unpredictable and counterproductive. For an example of this dynamic, I will briefly consider the implementation of ‘zero-tolerance’. I aim to show how zero-tolerance has simultaneously come to function as a crime control policy, even as it has been conceived and defended as a school policy. First, zero-tolerance has led to an increase in the number of youth incarcerated and high rate of student suspensions and expulsions. In combination with the shifting of public resources under neoliberalism, the effects of this policy have fostered an administrative atmosphere which is both fearful and suspicious of urban youth (Casella, 2001; Dohrn, 2000; Polakow, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The effect of this fear on the middle-range student is far wider, and potentially far more threatening to school reform, than the missing numbers of suddenly incarcerated youth. And there are also problems at the administrative level. Underlying this fear and suspicion is what sociologist David Garland refers to as a logic of retribution, whose effects insinuate themselves into the functioning of a wide range of administrative strategies and

decisions. I address this administrative logic, and attempt to complicate it, by briefly considering the way in which school surveillance and safety policy *parasitizes* a discourse of prevention—that is to say, it draws upon this discourse, if only to abandon the values of the discourse.

The combination of these forces has created the perfect conditions for surveillance policy to thrive in a city such as New York, especially in high schools mostly populated by low-income youth of color. These schools have become sites of control in which there are few mechanisms for dissent amongst those working within them (students, teachers, administrators, parents, etc). At the same time, this chapter also wants to suggest that surveillance policy is thriving *throughout* New York City public schools. It is *not* just impacting the schools at the bottom of the hierarchy. I refer to the ‘surveillance net’ to imply the holistic effect and range of such policies and practices. This approach captures not only the lower-tier high school and the ‘bad’ student, but also the middle-tier school and the ‘middle-range’ student. Before moving on to a portrait of the middle-tier high school and the middle-range students, I conclude this chapter by speculating on what this approach might help us learn more about surveillance policy and its impact on *all* students.

Neoliberal effects on policy

In chapter one, I explored several critical historical moments in the contemporary milieu of public school surveillance and security policy. Here, I want to show how these moments are also embedded within a larger social, political, and economic context. Several theorists situate current educational policy in terms of neoliberalism -- the retreat

of social welfare programs and the increase of social control polices. They suggest that the combination of these forces is helping to foment a climate of fear and suspicion in urban schools and communities (Monahan 2007; Fine, 2006; Katz, 2005; Ginwright et al, 2005; Editors, 2005; Giroux, 2003; Wacquant, 2001; Garland, 2001; Polakow, 2000). The federal government's "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) 2001 legislation is a good example of such policy. Although it gave students in failing schools a chance to enroll in successful district schools and required schools and districts to be held responsible for their under-prepared students and teachers, NCLB failed to allocate resources and funding to meet these needs. It held districts and schools accountable for outcomes they were ill-prepared to meet (Darling-Hammond, 2007).

NCLB offers a crystalline example of a punitive accountability system— forcing schools and educators to impose its own standards without compromise or questions. Such an accountability system fails to address the myriad structural factors that contribute to struggling schools. The law serves to penalize schools and educators – measuring compliance by the increase in standardized test scores of its students. Despite its intent, NCLB has done little to close the 'achievement' gap of Black and Latino students -- with only 38% of New York City's public high school students graduating in four years (Orfield, 2004).

At the same time, NCLB has been a financial windfall for standardized testing and textbook companies (such as McGraw Hill and Harcourt Corporations), awarding millions of dollars to (homeland) security companies. Homeland security-related businesses are said to be the economy's "fastest-growing sector – jumping from \$28

billion in 2003 to a projected \$170 billion by 2015” (Homeland Security Research Corporation, 2005 as quoted by Editors, 2005). When combined with the political rhetoric that has surrounded NCLB and sheer amount of money spent in the name of private enterprise and public reform, the salient underachievement of NCLB has fueled widespread distrust and ridicule of public schools.

This underachievement has roots in a wide range of social dynamics, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the school system. Drawing on extensive research that reveals the ways in which social class and socioeconomic status correlate with educational achievement, Jean Anyon (1997, 2005) demonstrates that confining poor youth of color to housing in poor and low-income urban neighborhoods and suburbs “produces segregated, low-income schools” (95, 2005). Such schools share a range of characteristics: insufficient funding; few college-prep resources (college counselors, access to computers, or AP courses); unqualified teachers; low academic standards; poor facilities; and overcrowded classrooms. Although the nation depends on its schools to create equitable opportunities for urban graduates, these constraints make it difficult for them to do so. A combination of macroeconomic policies, such as those of federal housing, minimum wage, and taxing, contribute to a depleted educational landscape for poor and low-income students, many of whom are Black and Latino. What institutions have offered, Anyon indicates, are segregated schools with low graduation rates, ultimately very low college attendance and graduation rates, and few labor market possibilities. Anyon argues that current macroeconomic policies limit the effectiveness of well-intentioned educational reform. Failing public schools are a consequence of such

policies. She comments, “An unjust economy and the policies through which it is maintained create barriers to educational success that no teacher or principal practice, no standardized test and no ‘zero tolerance’ policy can surmount” (2, 2005).

Michelle Fine (AAA talk, 2006) further suggests that national and local school policies generated in the wake of Columbine and the 9-11/War on Terror (e.g. zero tolerance, NCLB, etc.) might best be thought of as part of a larger agenda towards privatizing public schools. Fine argues that privatization, or what she calls the “privileged public sphere,” constitutes a re-alignment of public dollars and public bodies. Privatizing schools, Fine argues, effectively disenfranchises low-income youth. At the same time, it offers absolutely *no* alternative ‘public’ institutions besides prison. Fine refers to this dynamic as “banal accountability.” This thinking suggests that surveillance and security policies in schools can be understood as strategies for moving public bodies, not only to and from classrooms (a strengthened version of tracking and sorting), but also out of school altogether—into the prison system, or into a public sphere that does not want them or, as Jean Anyon argues, has no use for them.

Research continues to show that African American and Latino youth living in poor communities are exposed to schools with the most overcrowding and the least qualified teachers, factors that lead to consistently low test scores. Currently 43% of New York City’s fourth graders are reading below proficiency level and only 38% of high school students are graduating in four years. The National Center for Schools and Communities in New York City recently correlated schools with fewer resources to lower attendance and higher suspension and dropout rates. Not surprisingly, this study found a

correlation between qualified teachers, higher teacher attendance and better student behavior (Eskanazi et al, 2003).

School to prison pipeline

In such a landscape, a range of scholarly literature addresses what is often called the ‘school to prison pipeline’ in which the education system plays a role in preparing and navigating low-income youth of color towards prison (Advancement Project, 2001; American Bar Association, 2001; Brown, 2003, 2005; Ziedenberg, Brooks & Shiraldi, 2000). Drawing on this body of literature, but expanding the metaphor, Kathleen Nolan’s (2007) study of a large urban public high school in the Bronx suggests that while many of its students will not end up in prison, the school exposes urban youth of color to the same ‘order maintenance’ policing strategies they likely find in their neighborhoods. She argues that “impoverished urban students are managed by a complex inter-penetration of systems” in which the school “merges with an ideology of neighborhood policing, the courts, and even the prison.” Drawing on the work of sociologist David Garland, Nolan argues that within the context of heightened social insecurity and economic polarization brought on by neoliberal, global economic policy, urban schools do not merely facilitate mass imprisonment. They foster an economy of fear that surrounds urban youth. This process works through what Garland calls the ‘criminologies of everyday life’ and ‘the dangerous other’. Complementing this research, Nolan found that school officials have come to focus on preventing low level disorder because they see it as cost effective and hence, ‘common sense’. This focus has produced heightened surveillance, zero tolerance and order maintenance policing – all of which target economically marginalized youth of

color. These youth are then ‘constructed’ in the institution as ‘oriented towards crime’ and demanding of surveillance and penal control. A broad range of students therefore becomes “subjected to levels of surveillance and repression that are not the same as long term incarceration” (Nolan, 48), but are still indicative of efforts to control, contain, and effectively criminalize the non-criminal behavior of young people (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Nolan, 2007; Angelova, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; Balmer, 2006; DMI, 2005; Ginwright, 2005; Giroux, 2003; Dorhn, 2000; Noguera, 1995).

In this sense, surveillance trends in schools do not merely lean towards a heightened police presence and more cameras. Neither are their problems limited to a narrow band of implementation. They produce symptoms that can be found emerging across the landscape of neoliberalism – represented by a range of educational reform agendas and policies from the privatization of public schools to segregated housing and minimum wage policy to NCLB’s punitive accountability system. In this broad context, the limitations of surveillance and security measures are obvious. These measures are a contributing part of the problem at hand, offering no means for addressing the holistic consequences of excessive overcrowding³⁷, financial inequity, and a lack of educational services such as counseling and peer mediation. Advocacy of surveillance measures often signals an unwillingness to deal with underlying macroeconomic issues. It is part of a political *Zeitgeist* often phrased as the “race to the bottom”, in which the implementation of policies designed to control and contain seemingly ‘unwanted’

³⁷ I address the issue of overcrowding in chapter 3.

populations such as low-income youth of color, have come at the cost of social welfare programs. In a similar context, Manning Marable (2002) argues that “one of the central battlegrounds for democracy in the U.S. in the twenty-first century will be the effort to halt the dismantling of public education and public institutions in general for the expansion of the prison industrial complex” (p. 5).

Zero Tolerance

As referenced in chapter one, “zero tolerance” policies are those adopted by local school districts that call for increasingly punitive approaches to student discipline. As noted above, these policies fail to address many of the root causes of student violence in favor of punitive response. Initially, the federal government mandated these policies as part of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, in response to a series of school shootings that took place in mostly rural towns. This law requires that students be either suspended or expelled if they commit a serious offense (possession of a weapon or imposing serious acts of violence on school premises). Over time, as local school districts began implementing their own versions of zero tolerance, schools began imposing suspension or expulsion for a far wider range of ‘misbehavior’ – school fights, nonviolent offenses, drug possession, and back-talking to a teacher (NYCLU, 2007; Polakow-Suransky, 1999). Researchers have documented several instances of punishments that far outstrip the offense, from the expulsion of a youth for bringing a pocket watch with a one-inch knife inside it to school (Louisiana), or a one-inch plastic gun (Seattle). At issue here is not that students should be allowed to bring real *or fake* guns, large *or small* knives to

school. Rather, critics of zero tolerance strategies are frustrated with the lack of alternatives and effective solutions being proposed to deal with these violations.

What is important to note, for my purposes, is the almost national acceptance of ‘zero-tolerance’ laws for punishing and expelling students along a slippery slope of infractions. One issue is the vagueness of what is deemed dangerous. A second issue hinges on the mechanics of the policy itself; one of the most frequent complaints of zero tolerance legislation is that it removes authority from principals. With no grey area, principals have little, if any, recourse for assessing the *degree of intent* behind a student’s action. Third, there is the issue of public outcry. Zero-tolerance plays to this outcry, providing politicians with sound bites and the opportunity to reassure their constituents with images of steadfastness. While zero tolerance policies have been in place for over a decade, they receive renewed interest and support in the rhetorical maelstroms that follow spectacular, and notably rare, incidents of school violence—even if they failed at the very school where such spectacular violence took place. This occurred in the wake of Columbine, and several others.³⁸ Finally, zero tolerance appears to have few substitutes in the pipeline of the school’s penal system. Schools seem to have few effective alternatives for punishing students for what might be considered minor violations, such as scuffles in the hallway. In this sense, zero tolerance legislation teaches children that once they do something wrong or have gotten into trouble, there is no way to rectify the situation. The gears of the system start moving. They are, in essence, doomed.

³⁸ Interestingly, CJCJ reports that “the rates of suspension in states, cities and counties seem to bear no relationship to actual incidence of school crime. Despite the well documented fact that urban schools in the biggest cities are likely to experience the most school crime, the school districts in Columbia, South Carolina, and Salem, Oregon are suspending and expelling students at between 5 and 6 times the rate of Chicago and San Francisco” (School House Hype: Two Years Later, Policy Brief, 2002)

Suspensions and expulsions

An analysis of national and state data compiled by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice³⁹ reveals that the most significant consequence of zero-tolerance policies is the increase in the rate of suspensions.⁴⁰ Nationally, the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights notes that suspensions have increased steadily for all students, rising from 1.7 million (or 3.7% of students) to 3.1 million (6.84% of students) by 1997. Unfortunately, urban youth of color are impacted by zero-tolerance policies at a much higher rate than their white counterparts. A Justice Policy Institute (JPI) analysis of recent data publicized by the Applied Research Center shows that in a number of cities, African American youths are suspended and expelled at rates many times higher than the rates at which white students are suspended and expelled. For instance, the NESRI report notes the U.S. Department of Education's statistics that "African American students make up 17 percent of the student population, but account for 36 percent of out of school suspensions and 31 percent of expulsions" (2007, 6; U.S. DOE, 2002; Casella, 2001). Not surprisingly, studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have shown that students who do not regularly attend school face a variety of health and safety risks, and that suspension has been associated with higher rates of dropping out of school.⁴¹

³⁹ <http://www.cjcr.org/pubs/schoolhouse/shh2exec.html>

⁴⁰ Educational theorist Henry Giroux argues that "zero tolerance does more than offer a simple solution to a complex problem; it has become a code word for a 'quick and dirty way of kicking kids out' of school rather than creating safe environments for them" (2003: 561; quote from Goodman, 2000).

⁴¹ Not only are students of color more vulnerable to dropping out of school altogether, they are also likelier to be incarcerated at a younger age than their white peers. Penalties for not complying under 'zero tolerance' legislation are extreme -- particularly for African American and Latino students. In their study of the U.S. juvenile justice system, Poe-Yamagata and Jones (2000) found that, in addition to having a higher percentage of arrest rates (relative to their representation in the general population), 58% of youth who end up in adult prisons are African American. This research showed that of the Black youth who are arrested, over half of them end up in adult prisons. In essence, the spotlight prior to arrest is on Black and Latino youth. Recent research complements this position, as a host of studies contend that greater police presence correlates with an elevation in arrests and incarceration rates for youth of color, especially African-Americans (see Fine et al, 2003; Ruck et al, 2005; Poe-Yamagata and Jones, 2000).

A tangential, but no less important piece of legislation that contributed to a punitive school policy environment was the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. This Act allocates more money to prison construction than to any other program (Brown, 1996). In other words, the prison system is big business. Between 1985 and 2000 the prison population grew from 744,206 to 2 million. The Justice Department reported in April 2000 that “black youth are forty-eight times more likely than whites to be sentenced to juvenile prison for drug offenses” (Press, 2000, p. 55). For more and more states, spending on prisons surpasses spending on higher education.⁴²

The logic of retribution

In order to understand the failures of ‘zero tolerance’, it is important to expose the logic underlying and driving the wider policies that inform it. Why have we come to rely on the police, courts, and prison systems to address social problems? Sociologist David Garland believes the answer to this question lies with the logic of prevention that has transformed into a logic of retribution. This belief does appear to bear itself out. Tracing New York City school and community policies during the period in which Rudolph Giuliani took over as mayor, reveals a decisive shift in policy discourse consistent with Garland’s claims. Garland contends that over the last twenty years we have seen the “reappearance of ‘just desserts’ retribution as a generalized policy goal in the US and the UK” (9, 2001). On his view, the retributive discourse of policymaking *produces* a fear of

⁴² Nevertheless, the Justice Policy Institute (2007) found that it is states that invest more in education that have lower rates of violent crime and incarceration. These researchers discovered that “of the 10 states that saw the biggest increases in higher education expenditure, eight saw violent crime rates decline, and five saw violent crime decline more than the national average. Of the 10 states that saw the smallest change in higher education expenditure, the violent crime rate rose in five states” (Policy Brief, 8/31/07⁴²)

crime among the public. It is the mechanism of this production that is the problem. What once was delegated to professional experts, practitioners, and administrators – namely, the power to discipline and punish its citizens -- has increasingly become the domain of conspicuous outsiders, such as policymakers, politicians, and the public. Garland argues that in the place of ‘expertism’, a ‘common sense’ approach to criminality prevails. The politicization of crime control and its centrality as a matter for public opinion continues to shape often counterproductive, inconsistent, and even contradictory assumptions that, in turn, shape policy (13). The resulting interplay between tenuous assumptions and *ad hoc* implementations has transformed criminological thought and research into a welter of theories and practices of control, which have since dominated criminological research and theory (14-15).

Crime is no longer treated as a consequence of deprivation, such as poverty, mental health issues, lack of education, job opportunity, or racial inequality, but the result of inadequate control. In this sense, current crime policy and the thinking it engenders (among researchers, the public, etc.) is aimed at controlling crime (ie. penalizing ‘the criminal’ with zero tolerance laws); it is not interested in systematically addressing underlying social and economic issues that might be contributing to criminal behaviors. Nor is it interested in rehabilitating one time offenders. This dynamic tends to feed the business of criminal justice more efficiently than it controls crime. It is in this context that Garland believes that control policies, “begin from a darker version of the human condition” (15).

In order to flourish, control-oriented crime policy requires a fearful public and a public sphere which fosters little or no debate around its efficacy. Despite the fact the public's 'common sense' approach to crime has resulted in illogical and unjust control and containment policies, Garland does acknowledge the fact that the public can grow tired of ineffective crime policy. When this happens, a new infrastructure emerges, and it is one that is oriented towards prevention and security. In this context, Garland argues, we see the creation of community-based organizations, neighborhood watch groups, crime prevention and criminal justice think tanks, business improvement districts (BIDS), and after-school programs. These groups attempt to fill in the systematic gaps in broader institutional control, building up from within these gaps, and encouraging communities to police themselves (17, Garland). In the public sector, crime control policy begins to be oriented towards "punitive segregation" – such as the enclaves of urban schools in poor communities. In the private sector, local efforts to internally control and monitor threats are aimed towards preventing crime -- such as surveillance cameras (CCTV – Closed-Captioned Television). An example of such a combined public/private effort might be found in New York City's Metropolitan Transit System's *See Something, Say Something*⁴³ campaign. This media blitz took over the subways after 9-11. It implored train riders to keep an eye on their surroundings and watch suspicious passengers and packages with a close eye.

One of the results of this genealogy in crime control, Garland cites, is that the line between the public and private sectors is invariably blurred. Publicly approved

⁴³ Famously plastered throughout New York City's MTA subway system. Will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

preventative measures such as neighborhood watch programs and gated communities slowly encroach on the freedom of ‘suspected’ individuals to inhabit and pass through public space, despite the fact that they have committed no crime (Low, 2003). A profusion of privately created devices has assisted in this effort. Such products are now being used by public institutions, such as the placement of electronic monitoring devices (RFID tags) inside welfare cards, passports, and loyalty cards. These offer a way for the government to track individuals’ movements and purchases (O’Harrow, 2006; Lyon, 2003). Under the spotlight of safety and protection, public school students are increasingly exposed (and forced to submit) to surveillance technologies – “those that facilitate the identification, monitoring, tracking, and control of people” (x, Monahan, 2006a).

In order to accommodate and allay the public’s heightened fear of crime, public and private sectors have come to work together to provide overlapping functions. In many instances they work towards the same goals. As the above examples attest, the public sector has grown increasingly reliant on the crime strategies and tools used by the private sector – most especially in the area of surveillance and security. As the public sector opens up new enclaves for business, the new order in turn helps private business interests, which then justify those selfsame policies. Private efforts, no longer merely invisible benefactors to the state tax coffers, are now “increasingly recognized by government [as] a partner in the production of security and crime control” (17). As the state models itself on these new partners, it has come to employ the tactics of private business, often implementing without the requisite scrutiny or care. For instance, without

data that might suggest that video surveillance was a good tool for school safety, New York City's city council approved \$120 million for the installation of video surveillance cameras in every public high school (Local Law 52). While in the past the most fertile ground for the proliferation of surveillance practices was also the most private ground, overlapping public and private partnerships have helped to make surveillance an aspect of everyday public life and movement. The blurring of public and private sectors has made it more and more difficult to examine these changes in public policy and hold politicians accountable for even their most conspicuous failures.⁴⁴

The logic of prevention and retribution

Schools are an important site for observing the nexus of retributive crime control policy and preventative surveillance and safety provisions. While the discourse of school surveillance invokes safety and prevention, the outcome is punitive. As has been widely documented in a series of recent reports and bears out in my research study, these measures don't necessarily produce a safer school environment. Students report an increase in the number of violent incidences, attest to harassment they experience at the hands of police and school safety agents (SSA), and describe a feeling of danger and disillusion.

Unlike crime policies motivated by retribution where the sole purpose is to punish and contain criminals; surveillance has a nefarious relationship with the production of suspicion. Thought to be preventative aids in the control of crime and violence, surveillance policies and technologies also have the power to produce the context they

⁴⁴ In chapter one, I reviewed the lack of accountability at play in schools, especially as it pertains to the increased security and surveillance of students. Although Mayor Bloomberg agreed to an evaluation of the Impact program, for instance, the DOE has yet to release this report to the public.

are designed to prevent. Surveillance scholar Torin Monahan (2006) suggests that surveillance and security practices and policies actually “nourish [our society’s] retributive impulses” (9). At the same time, school surveillance policies also engender a need for protection and safety – and they rely heavily on the discourse of prevention. Monahan argues that debates over the effectiveness of surveillance tend to “obscure deeper changes in social relations brought about by surveillance and security regimes” (109). He argues that these debates are framed by a logic of ‘trade-offs’ – ie. security versus liberty, security versus privacy, security versus freedom, and security versus cost. This logic, and the discourses it produces, obscure the deeper motivations and politics behind surveillance and security and function to keep the public focused on the ‘wrong’ questions.

David Lyon (2003) contends that, in fact, “surveillance today sorts people into categories, assigning worth or risk, in ways that have real effects on their life-chances. Deep discrimination occurs, thus making surveillance not merely a matter of personal privacy but of social justice” (1). Chapter three will help to show how the New York City DOE’s security policies participate in the sorting process. While I agree with Lyon that surveillance is most certainly a matter of social justice and plays a role in sorting human beings, one of the underlying claims of this dissertation is that enclave surveillance does not so much sort but indiscriminately groups youth together in a process I refer to as ‘the surveillance net’.

The Surveillance Net

Thus far, I have tried to show how school disciplinary policy over the last two decades creates a negative feedback loop and appears to have a self-perpetuating function. The culture of New York City's public schools has become definitively marked by their surveillance practices. These policies have become so insidious that ordinary, or middle-range students are being 'trapped' in the broad net of surveillance. They are so widespread, in fact, that this dynamic has come to impact all students and schools, however unevenly distributed this impact may be.

To underscore the impact of surveillance on the everyday lives of students and schools, one must find a way to describe the pervasiveness of surveillance in New York City's public schools. The best metaphor I have found is that of a fishing net that catches more than it wants, or *bycatches*. In the Pacific Ocean west of Mexico and Central America, large yellowfin tuna swim together with several species of dolphins. In order to catch the tuna, the fishing industry has created a bycatch system by which they catch the tuna and the dolphins and then release the dolphins from the nets (also referred to as 'purse-seines'). What makes the tuna fishing practice so interesting as an analogy to school surveillance and safety policy? The practice intentionally *captures both* tuna and dolphins together, and then *releases* the dolphins from the net. The analogy extends even further. For, "unlike most other fisheries, the vast majority (more than 99%) of dolphins captured by the ETP tuna fishery are released alive; thus, an individual dolphin may be chased, captured and released many times during its lifetime" (Perrin, Wursig, Thewissen).⁴⁵ Before the use of the modern purse-seines, tropical tuna were caught using

⁴⁵ This material was found on the Southwest Fisheries Science Center website: <http://swfsc.noaa.gov/textblock.aspx?Division=PRD&ParentMenuId=228&id=1408>. "The ecological association of tuna and

the pole-and-line method. In the 1950s, technological developments (which included synthetic netting and a hydraulically driven power-block to haul in the catch) made it possible to use very large purse-seine nets around entire schools of tuna, and catch many tons of fish at a time.⁴⁶

Just as there may be holes in any net, the metaphor is not perfect. But it animates many of the dynamics in zero tolerance and surveillance school policies. Initiated in the name of security and made possible by new, indiscriminately powerful technologies, these policies intentionally capture more students than they punish. School security policies such as greater police/security guard presence, and the use of metal detectors, scanners, cameras, ID tracking machines, and biometric systems help to produce the surveillance net. The vast net of surveillance scoops up not just the big fish, but the small fish too; or in this case, not just the tuna, but the dolphins as well.

This dissertation as whole will go to show how this ‘net’ has impacted several students at one Bronx high school. But in a broader sense, it offers a portrait of how the New York City public school system has felt the impact of this net. Put simply, DOE policies have threatened the good for the purpose of weeding out the bad. Dependence on such policies has left the DOE with no mechanism for evaluation or corrective procedure.

dolphins is not clearly understood, but it has had two important practical consequences: it has formed the basis of a successful tuna fishery, and it has resulted in the deaths of a large number of dolphins. This is the heart of the tuna-dolphin issue. The number of dolphins killed since the fishery began some four decades ago is estimated to be over 6 million animals, the highest known for any fishery. For comparison, the total number of whales of all species killed during commercial whaling in the 20th century is about 2 million. In recent years, the kill of dolphins in the ETP tuna fishery has declined by two orders of magnitude, but even at this level it remains the largest documented cetacean kill in the world.”

⁴⁶ Purse-seining for tuna can be conducted in one of three ways: the net may be set around schools of tuna associated with dolphins ("dolphin sets," which catch large yellowfin tuna), around schools of tuna associated with logs or other floating objects ("log sets," which catch mainly skipjack but also bigeye and small yellowfin tuna), or around unassociated schools of tuna ("school sets," which catch small yellowfin and skipjack tuna). The proportion of each set type has varied considerably, but during the last decade, dolphin and school sets have been roughly equal in number (about 45% of the 15,000-20,000 sets each year), and the remainder (about 10%) have been log sets. Dolphins are released from the net during the backdown procedure. If all goes well, the dolphins are released alive, but the process requires skill by the captain and crew, proper operation of gear, and conducive wind and sea conditions. As with any complicated procedure at sea, things can go wrong, and when they do, dolphins may be killed.

Often enacted without the input of school staff and educators, they begin to self-perpetuate as *policy without limits* – policy that perpetuates its own necessity and criminalizes urban youth.⁴⁷

Capturing the middle-tier high school

A good example of a recent *policy without limits* was introduced at Baldwin High School in the middle of the 2006-2007 school year. Due to an issue with overcrowding in the hallways during class time and period changes, the principal – under pressure from the regional superintendent -- introduced Odd/Even bathroom periods. Bathrooms would only be open during odd periods of the day in spring and even periods of the day in fall. This example reveals the many agents at play in school surveillance. Not only would the school monitor *all* of its students, but the DOE would now monitor the school's administrators. In turn, the school's staff would be forced to impose absurd, almost draconian rules on natural bodily functions. But the structural problem, the issue driving the policy, remained untouched. The school would still be overcrowded. Interestingly, while the *interior* of the bathrooms remains one of the few unmonitored spaces in a school, Baldwin's new rule ensured that *access* to them would be regulated and scrutinized as a practical matter of scheduling.

Chapter three details the historical legacy and slow descent of Baldwin from its solid standing as a large, middle-tier high school in the Bronx. At this juncture, I want to

⁴⁷ A recent example of such a policy is what is referred to as the 'roving metal detector' policy which is also known as random searches or the cell phone ban. This 2006 DOE policy targets schools without permanent metal detectors in an effort to insure that students are not bringing contraband items into school. As a consequence, cell phones are now banned at every high school – along with MP3 players and other benign items that might go off in the metal detector. When it was introduced last April, this policy helped bring to light for parents, educators, and activists the role that schools were playing in controlling and policing *all students* without due cause. See also Weiss, J. -- *Bait & Switch: A View of the Cell Phone Ban from the Bronx*. <http://brooklynrail.org/2006/07/local/bait-and-switch>

briefly draw attention to the importance of studying a middle-tier high school in understanding the impact of surveillance policy in a wider context. New York City public schools exist in an unspoken hierarchy. John Devine (1996) defines its lower-tier schools “occupying the bottom stratum of the pyramid” (23). Within each school, there exists a tracking system which draws some students to the top, forces others to the bottom, and lets the middle fend for itself. In 1992, the period in which Devine was studying violence and security in New York City schools, a ‘lower-tier’ school was one defined by low test scores, poor attendance, and heavy surveillance. But today, as school policy has come to model itself on surveillance trends, policymakers offer a ‘one size fits all’ approach to school violence. Middle-tier schools such as Baldwin are thereby forced to accept a regime of surveillance strategies and personnel, metal detectors and security guards onto their campuses. Caught in the throes of Mayor Bloomberg’s efforts to curb violence in and around schools, Baldwin’s administration forestalled the installation of metal detectors as long as it could, before finally acquiescing in the fall 2005 to pressure from the Department of Education and the regional superintendent’s office.

Solidly middle-tier, with a strong program that attracts low-income, college-bound students from all over the Bronx, Baldwin had been one of the few remaining large high schools in the Bronx with a good reputation. Although it still has a well-respected college-bound program, the school struggles with issues faced by lower-tier high schools: severe over-crowding, few extra-curricular resources other than sports, a lack of resources for preparing students for college and college applications, and heavy surveillance and security. Also problematic is its location next to an upper-tier high

school (explored in depth in chapter three). Compared with college-bound programs in other elite or upper-tier high schools, the enormity of the school's issues makes it hard for Baldwin to remain competitive.

Perhaps the best way to visualize 'middle-tier' is to compare three Bronx high schools that statistically occupy lower, middle, and upper tiers. Kennedy High School is similar to Baldwin in population size and its attempts to remain one school (although, according to Insideschools.org, the new principal hopes to break it into smaller schools). It also has several specialized programs, includes hi-tech security scanning procedures, and 8 total floors and escalators.

In focusing on a middle tier school such as Baldwin, I was able to see how surveillance policies affect schools that may not be initially or directly targeted by such policies, but get caught in its net. I also witnessed the negative spiral Baldwin experienced as a result. The point in focusing on the middle-tier school is not to suggest that lower-tier schools do not deserve our attention. On the contrary; by drawing attention to the way in which surveillance and security policies affect every student and school (not just the worst of them), my hope is to galvanize a wide range of support to effect change across schools.

Table 1. A breakdown of statistics comparing three neighboring Bronx high schools.⁴⁸

| | Darwin (upper-tier) | Baldwin (middle-tier) | Kennedy (lower-tier) |
|---|--|--|--|
| Student population | 2,417 ⁴⁹ | 4,467 (under-reported) ⁵⁰ | 4122 ⁵¹ |
| Attendance Year to Date | 96.1 | 80.0% | 72%% |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch | 22.4% | 90.8% | 78% |
| 9 th Graders reading at Level | 98.8% | 37.9% | 12.6% |
| Graduation Rate (4 years) | 97.7% | 69.6% | 44.5% |
| Suspensions -- (as compared to averages from similar schools) ⁵² | 29/176 (16%) | 91/138 (66%) | 189/138 (136%) |
| Spending on security | 457,500 school safety | 790,827 school safety | Over 800,000 |
| Spending on school aids & support s | \$1,360,000 | \$1,453,000 | \$1,425,303 |
| Overcrowding ⁵³ | 102% | 140% | 136.7% |
| Security policy | ID scanning machines, Security Guard at entrance, 2-3 NYPD/SSA, Video cameras (monitors at security guard station) | Video cameras (no monitors in sight), Metal detectors, scanning wands, School Security Agents (SSA), School Aids, NYPD | Video cameras (no monitors in sight), Metal detectors, scanning wands, School Security Agents (SSA), School Aids, NYPD |

Note: data is collected from 2004-2005 DOE reports and InsideSchools.org, an independent guide to NYC schools. I had to rely on the latter because the DOE reports are dated.

Capturing the middle-range students

⁴⁸ Interestingly, in the November 2007 Report Card issued by the NYCDOE, Darwin received an A; Baldwin a C; and Kennedy is “Under Review”.

⁴⁹ American Indian 0.41%; Asian / Pac. Isl 51.14%; Hispanic 6.37%; Black 4.72%; White 28.38%; Not Reported 8.98%

⁵⁰ American Indian 0.27%; Asian / Pac. Isl 5.69%; Hispanic 63.85%; Black 25.72%; White 3.31%; Not Reported 1.16%

⁵¹ Asian/Pac. Isl 3%; Hispanic 68%; Black 28%; White 3%

⁵² InsideSchools.org defines “suspensions” as showing: “An approximation of the number of students suspended for misbehavior in the 2004-2005 school year. In general, a low number means a school has a good overall climate, while a high number suggests a school is unruly. However, a new principal who is struggling to bring a school under control will sometimes suspend lots of students; a high number may reflect a get-tough policy. The avg. for similar schools on the next line is the average number of suspensions for similar-sized school.”

⁵³ InsideSchools.org defines “overcrowding” as: “Schools at 100 percent capacity have the same number of children enrolled as the building was designed to accommodate. Those over 100 percent are overcrowded; those under 100 percent may have unused space. However, these numbers are approximate and should only be taken as a rough guide as to building conditions. For example, the data may not take into account the fact that some schools have special education classes that only hold a few students (and therefore seem to have room according to the data, while in fact they are at capacity), while other schools may have increased their capacity by converting offices to classrooms (and therefore are not as crowded as the numbers suggest).”

In order to apprehend the real impact of surveillance on the ground, I chose to research the experiences and perceptions of urban teenagers themselves. As I began exploring the topic for research and trying to locate a site and a group of participants, I began speaking with youth I already knew.⁵⁴ When I asked one student about violence at her school and how she avoided it, she told me that there were three types of students: the good ones, the bad ones, and those who “sit in the middle rows” in class, implying that she did what she could to stay out of the way of problems at school by sitting in the middle, out of the line of sight of authority. I began to think about those students who were ‘caught in the middle’ of surveillance policy; those who were getting swept up in its tide and coughing on its exhaust fumes. I came to think of my research participants as located in a ‘middle-range’ -- borrowing from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s usage of the “middle ranges of agency” as the place to look for “effectual creativity and change” (2003, 13). The twenty youth with whom I eventually worked as participants in the research were what I call ‘middle-range’ students – those who are, by and large, ‘successful’ students –committed to getting an education and graduating high school.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ My decision to work directly with urban youth on a project on surveillance grew out of my work with New York City in my capacity as an after-school educator. From the structural to the personal, I found urban teenagers to be critically aware of how school and city policies impact them. And when it comes to being watched and scrutinized by adults, teenagers seem to come equipped with a third-eye. Although it is typically “motivated by issues of equity, fairness, justice and respect for the person in a digitally mediated world; a world where judgments are made on the basis of encoded information about an individual, rather than on the basis of an interpersonal and experientially grounded knowledge of an entire person” (131, Ball and Haggarty), one of the problems in surveillance scholarship is that it is often un-peopled and under-theorized with regard to race. Christian Parenti traces surveillance in American back to slavery – but it is an historical treatment, not an empirical research study with human subjects. The same can be said of James Scott’s work. Gender and class tend to surface more in surveillance scholarship. Some powerful case studies of surveillance camera operators who follow and objectify women more have been conducted in London. Edward Soja’s *Postmodern Geographies* and Setha Low’s *Behind the Gates* both use a geographical lens to examine spatial ordering, social class and race.

⁵⁵ Though it is likely that few, if any, will attend top-tier universities, some of them are in higher-tracked classes and have plans to go to college. Some of them are involved in after-school programs or community-based organizations. Many of them work jobs after school and have plans to graduate on time. A few attended GED programs; one of them dropped out of school; and another is struggling to stay in school to complete his senior year. Another was a struggling student frequently in trouble with school authority who decided to focus on school her junior year. Out of twenty friends with whom she began high school, she remains the only one in school. These are what I call ‘middle-range’ students. My use of ‘middle-range’ does not refer to students who receive average grades or come from middle-class backgrounds; nor do I mean to suggest that these students entirely escape trouble with authority. Like so many youth I have encountered, these are students who work hard, do their best to attend class, and continue to believe in the possibility of education.

Similar to the ways in which surveillance policy catches the middle-tier school *at the macro, institutional level*, this dissertation argues that surveillance practice catches the middle-range student *at the micro, individual level*.⁵⁶ Surveillance policy is so pervasive that it impacts every student – from those going through their day, to those trying to get to and from class. My decision to work with middle-range students stems from a desire to capture the ways that surveillance in schools affects not only the most vulnerable and marginalized students, but also its impact on students who are “doing right” according to the system. I believe that conducting research with middle-range students who hang in the balance (and often *just beyond* the grasp of punitive policy) can help inform our understanding of the factors that contribute to increasing drop out rates, push out practices, and the criminalization of youth.

Like most students, middle-range students can articulate the problems they see in their schools. But they can do more precisely because they are not as marginal as some of their peers. Teachers pay attention to them; their parents advocate for them when necessary; and they generally talk about things that bother them to their peer group. As the following chapters will serve to show, the middle-range students with whom I worked were not simply upset that their cell phones were prohibited, but exhibited a keen awareness of the injustice behind the policies in their school/s. While many students

⁵⁶ In terms of the surveillance net, we might think of the middle-range students as the dolphins who school around the tuna. Students being targeted by the net – i.e. ‘the usual suspects’ – might be the tuna. As described above, the dolphin and tuna stick together; I would argue this is a very apt way of thinking about middle-range students. They are not so far from their friends who struggle in school; in fact they often help their struggling peers as Elizabeth attests: “because I know those troubled kids. they’re good kids. like those are my friends. because they’re in a place where . . . basically, at home, they’re not taught to succeed. and at school, they’re not taught to succeed. they’re not gonna succeed. like I have friends talking about dropping out of school. they’re not graduating. like that kills me. . . I believe that if the school knows . . . if the city knows that this isn’t something just at school, something at home, they should try at least to help us out, but it’s a constant “I don’t want you here. you’re not gonna succeed and you aren’t.” To draw the metaphor further, it might be useful to consider ‘the Advanced Placement students’ as those who are, indeed, far enough from the center of the net and at the periphery that they don’t get caught. But, being so far on the periphery has its own consequences for students.

across the district may have felt powerless to take action, these students displayed the desire and potential to help advocates and organizers not only articulate the issues, but also set agendas for change.

Chapter Three – *The Injustice of School-based Surveillance*

Background

This chapter begins to paint a picture of Baldwin High School in the Bronx and refers to two contributing factors to what students insist is the school's downward spiral since metal detectors were installed in September 2005. Part of their awareness contributed to their perception of student life at the high school next to theirs. One school has recently been deemed unsafe; the other is a school with an almost untouchable reputation. One school is middle-tier and quickly sinking; the other is upper-tier and among the top public high schools in the country. By exposing the disparities between the two schools, my analysis is focused on reflecting on the differential nature of surveillance policy across New York City's public schools. I end this chapter by reflecting on the ways in which urban youth of color are seen as threats because it is an essential context for understanding school safety policy.

Baldwin High School – a description using ethnographic methods

My first introduction to Baldwin High School was through its students. I was invited to regularly attend their newly founded hip hop poetry club. The club was held in Mr. Greer's room after school. Although my work as an after-school educator in New York City had taken me into many of the city's high schools, I had little knowledge of Baldwin before I encountered it as a researcher. It did not take long for me to grow accustomed to the hour-long train ride from Brooklyn to the Bronx. If I rode during school commute hours, I could discern the Baldwin students from the other high school-

aged teens on the train; and after months of research, I felt a kinship with the school, its students and teachers, its wide lawn and even its fortress-like architecture.

I visited Baldwin nearly every Tuesday afternoon, from January to June of 2006. In these hours, I went to Mr. Greer's room on the third floor of the school and spent time with Elizabeth, Rhina, Lolo, David, Dred, Senica, Rafael, Ayesha, Jessica, Jessie, John, Ben and a few other students who were members of the Poetry Club.

Attending the school consistently allowed me to familiarize myself with my student research participants. In turn, they came to know me. I also became a familiar face with teachers and with security at the entrances. I also wanted to experience Baldwin at odd times of the day so as not to acclimate to the routine that daily schooling engenders. For this reason, I visited the school at other times of the day, mostly in the mornings. I observed students waiting in line to enter the building. I also sat in on teacher's classrooms, and met with teachers and other staff during their breaks. This gave me an opportunity to see the school and its practices throughout the entire school day.



Baldwin school from above – entrance/tower

Baldwin is a large, grayish structure surrounded by well-kept grass and aged, looming elm trees. Ivy creeps up the front of the building and through the gates on the windows. The fortress-like building takes up a large city block. It boasts a locked-in courtyard which no one ever enters or exits. Its football and track fields are surrounded almost entirely by chain-link fencing. The imposing main entrance features a faded green steeple and mounted gothic gargoyles overlooking those who enter. The school's labyrinthine passageways, basements, secret towers, locked rooms on each floor, wide hallways, and large classrooms can make getting from one place to another a long day of roaming. Security has sealed off many unauthorized spaces in the school, and has proved deft at recognizing unfamiliar faces in the wrong places.⁵⁷ In the building's foyer is a security desk usually surrounded by several officers. To the left is a metal detector and

⁵⁷ My efforts to roam hallways on every floor of the building was consistently interrupted by security following me or, far worse, barking at me from one end of the hallway in front of large groups of students: "Excuse me! excuse me! Who are you and where do you think you are going?"

scanning machine. Only those with special privileges – school administrators, teachers, staff, and guests with appropriate paperwork – can enter through the front of the school and, of those, all but guests can generally bypass the security protocol. It used to be that parents did not have to go through scanners, but now they do. The regal entryway, framed by an arched brick façade and pre-war windows, is no longer accessible to students. After the metal detectors, scanning wands, and armies of security personnel were introduced to Baldwin students in September 2005, students had to leave their cell phones or MP3 players at home, and enter through the east side doors of the school. Each morning close to 5,000⁵⁸ students enter school through the basement.

From 7:30 until 8, the 4 train stops at Mosholu Parkway in 10 minute intervals and a new surge of mostly Black and Latino teenagers rush across the Parkway, stopping traffic as the light changes from green to red. At their particular entrance, students crowd outside the side entrance of the school, funnel through the doors, and remove their belts, their boots, and any other object of clothing that might cause the metal detector to go off. Once inside the building, they go through one of three metal detectors and scanners, watched by roughly ten security guards (SSA) posted at various points to ensure a speedy process. Some stand on the inside of the doors of the building and yell at students to get in line or remove belts and coats; others watch the monitors or search bags; others check program cards. Female security guards generally work the scanning wands if and when a student beeps as they pass through the detector. Students caught with doo-rags, hats,

⁵⁸ Although attendance is an issue in large high schools, students insist that Baldwin is heavily crowded by mid-day. The school reports the population at close to 4,500 but students say this number is under-reported.

beads, and t-shirts with snowmen on them are asked to leave or their items will be confiscated. (Rapper Young Jeezy’s grimacing snowman logo t-shirt—accused of being a coded symbol for cocaine—has been banned from Baldwin, as well as many school districts across the country.). Big white posters tacked to the walls in the hallways of the school announce the rules. The side entrance is appropriately situated next the lunchroom so students who are late by five minutes or more can go and sit through the period in the lunchroom. If students make it through security in time for class, they head up to their classroom on one of the six floors of school by way of one of the school’s twenty two caged stairwells. Mounted up high in the stairwells are video cameras (dark-tinted globe-like cameras). No one knows where the monitors are, but students are certain that no one is watching what is being recorded, so a lot goes on in the stairwells. They do not appear to be incorrect in their suspicions.⁵⁹

The high school was founded in 1897 – and has moved three times in its history: from W. 13th street to 59th & 10th in Manhattan to, finally, its home in the Bronx. Until 1983, it was an all-boy’s school. The school’s illustrious history mimics that of many of the larger, urban schools in New York City. But Baldwin is also one of the few large comprehensive high schools in the Bronx to maintain its unity; it has yet to be phased out into small schools like Walton, JFK, or Taft. It has a roster of famous alumni; features several after-school clubs and sports teams; and is broken up into smaller learning communities. It is best known for its Macy honors program which, as reported by *InsideSchools*, “attracts intelligent, hard-working kids, many of whom are poor enough to

⁵⁹ Rhina was told by the head of security that “no one watches what’s going on in the cameras” (interview).

qualify for free lunch, and prepares them for selective colleges such as MIT, Columbia, Wesleyan, Tufts, and Yale” (www.insideschools.org/fs/school_profile.php?id=1000). Students in Macy are required to maintain an 85 average and have a highly qualified and well-regarded teaching staff. There are other specialized programs offered at Baldwin, as well. They include Health Professions, Public Service, Business Enterprise, Technology; however, out of roughly 5,000 students, less than a quarter of them are enrolled in specialized programs.⁶⁰

Most recently, the school developed a reputation for a lack of safety and increasing violence. (It has been reported that Baldwin students are very familiar with the local police precinct, but my perception is that comparatively its students are no different than others attending large public high schools.) A string of events on the periphery of the school helped create this perception, along with the belief that without metal detectors, the school would not be safe. Students reported an incident involving students from a different school fighting nearby. One of the youth involved in this fight was murdered with a machete. This is no doubt a worrisome and gruesome incident, but it is important to note that it neither involved Baldwin students, nor occurred on Baldwin property, but nearby the school. According to InsideSchools.org:

In spring 2004, three students were robbed at gunpoint in the school: a boy who was cutting class in the basement, a student whose money was taken in a bathroom, and a student whose phone was taken in a stairwell, the school’s principal said. She said it was not clear whether the robbers were intruders or students, but, partly as a result of those incidents, metal detectors were installed in the fall of 2005.

There have been no serious incidents of violence at Baldwin since the metal

⁶⁰ Out of 12 youth participants in my study, several were enrolled in one of the specialized programs. All of these participants, however, are what I have labeled middle-range students (see chapter two).

detectors were installed, but students report a significant number of fights. This notion that fights have increased is well-corroborated by students. Rhina stated:

because back then [before detectors], you'd fight out there on Jerome, not in school. Why would we fight in school? So we can get suspended? We used to fight on Jerome. But now, let's fight right here. Come on, let's go. Back then, people would stay out of our way, go to Jerome. That's where the police should be. And like they're all in here. It's, like, go away. They pass by the classrooms and they watch you (2, Interview).

There is no evidence to suggest that metal detectors have improved the actual security situation within the school premises, nor that the events leading to its implementation might have been prevented with the help of increased security. In fact, everyone I spoke with at the school reported just the opposite: since the installation of metal detectors, the school has buckled under more violence. Teachers, school counselors, students, and even deans, each suggested to me that when a school turns into a space of suspicion and pervasive monitoring, the first thing compromised is its safety. Mr. Pultinas, a popular English teacher who also leads the WITT (Word, Image, Technology Team) Seminar, and editor for the school magazine, *Magpie* (winter 2005/2006), wrote in the introduction:

We are aware that this publication and conference coincide with the deployment this year of metal detectors in our school for the first time in its illustrious 108 year history. This procedure requires that each of its approximately 5,000 students and each school guest be scanned for weapons upon entry. The decision, seemingly irreversible, has considerably altered the tone of our school. It has not gone unchallenged (2).

In his introduction, Pultinas also describes the walkout of 1,500 students and then dedicates this edition to the “spirit of activism” present in the school. He concludes by adding, “our efforts are an attempt to claim a public space to discuss what our school and

communities could be, now that our school is supposedly ‘safe.’ We hope to counter the sense of disempowerment, imprisonment and captivity that many of us feel has become pervasive” (2) in the school. Reading his words, we hear the tenor of a veteran teacher who is frustrated with the way his school chooses to address security issues. What explains his ability to speak out in a school publication without getting into trouble? While a comprehensive response to this question exceeds the scope of this dissertation, it is worth noting the vehicle he used to articulate his dissent: a student magazine. At the same time, Pultinas’ dissent in the magazine also reminds us of the slippage between the disciplinary and the control society that does exist in urban schools today. This slippage allows him to speak out against a school policy without fear of reprisal or reprimand.

Having worked for several years in and out of large high schools throughout New York City, I have become used to how deflated such institutional spaces can feel upon entering. I was familiar with working with students who seemed hollowed out and defeated by the daily rituals (or lack of them) of schooling. But I recorded in my field notes a very different feeling in my first encounter with Baldwin and its students. As daunting as it appeared on the outside, the space still felt markedly solid on the inside. Part of this, I discern, has to do with the fact that the school is still whole and has not been broken into small schools. There is a collective pride about the institution. Veteran teachers and college counselors are well-known among students and, seemingly, well-respected. The library is large, open, and well-stocked with books and boasts at least one working librarian (an unfortunately uncommon staff feature in large urban schools). And although the highly competitive specialized programs at the school impact the ability of

its students to be totally united, the school's proud history and legacy seemed to imbue students with a sense of pride about the place. For instance, students referred to many of its famous alumni, such as James Baldwin and Ralph Lauren, when talking about their school. And they recognized that it was one of the top Bronx public high schools: "I believe [Lional] and [Baldwin] are the only good [public, non-specialized] schools left," Rhina reported.

But the installation of metal detectors contributed to a *before and after* way of thinking and talking about the school, as Rhina commented, "I believe [Lional] has succeeded in being the only one left." There seemed to be a very present nostalgia about the place – one that only got stronger as conditions got worse. What often gets overlooked when considering the impact of security and safety measures on school campuses are the ways in which they transform a school's sense of itself – its collective spirit and pride.

Stigma

When speaking about why such changes bothered them so much, students felt the school's strong reputation was being stepped on and sacrificed, and they understood the larger price they themselves would pay for the school's slipping reputation. As important to students as the incidences that occur at the hands of security officers, or the long delays in the mornings, are the subtle, myriad ways that school surveillance initiatives attach such a stigma to the school and its students. Although she spoke eloquently about how much she loved Baldwin, by the middle of her senior year, Elizabeth, one of the most vocal and visible Macy students on campus, began warning her peers and

underclassmen to choose another school to attend or drop out of the school entirely.

I found middle-range students like Elizabeth and others involved in my research to display a heightened sensitivity to the subtle and somewhat gradual changes taking shape on campus following policy shifts. They seemed to sense their *own* fate being jeopardized. They noticed, for instance, when the resources needed for more college counselors were being diverted for more security, or the timely departure of their favorite teachers and deans. Their favorite English Teacher, Mr. Greer, chose to leave Baldwin at the end of 2005. He explains: “Oh no, my decision to leave had a lot to do with [the changes the metal detectors brought about].... I have a lot of [Baldwin] pride, and I think that a lot of my success there as a teacher is just because I really loved the students and I take pride in them and I appreciate them, but more and more I knew, I just felt like it was becoming a sinking ship, that things were getting worse and worse” (7, Interview). When I asked Mr. Greer whether it was the metal detectors that forced the move, he told me: “It was pretty drastic. I mean as soon as they shut down the lunches and locked the doors... and put up the metal detectors it was like totally different” (8, Interview).

For many students at Baldwin who have worked hard to be the first in their family to even think about going to college, these shifts affect not only their present, but also their future. Elizabeth’s writing expressed the frustration of being on the receiving end of policy:

I ask myself, how is it that a school with such a high reputation such as mine doesn't have the necessary support from the state to send us "poor underprivileged students of color" to college [when] many of these "poor underprivileged students of color" don't know where to find this help, information, programs, scholarships?(Email correspondence, 4/1/07).

Elizabeth felt confident that she would get to college regardless of the school's downward spiral because she "already [had] a college-oriented home where [she] learned the do's and don'ts of the process." She explained: "my two oldest sisters have graduated and the one before me is in Rochester cloning cells or something of that nature." But, she told me, many of her friends "don't have anyone they know who went or goes to college to even guide them through this stressful experience. Like Marisa, she never took her SAT's, doesn't know what HEOP or a W2 form is. I am her college advisor."

Elizabeth's frustration intensified over the course of her junior year and into her senior year. One of the subtle and indirect, but profound impacts of the installation of the metal detectors at Baldwin can be heard in the students' frustration and disappointment. Because they attach an immediate and hard-to-reverse stigma to a school, they also negatively impact a school's sense of pride and unity – qualities that help keep a community and its inhabitants safe and protected. At the beginning of her senior year (several months after I concluded my on site research), I asked Elizabeth how school was. She wrote back:

School is a complete hellhole. There seems to me more police officers. More and more harassment and distress is inundating the school atmosphere. I keep hearing more teachers are leaving. Students wanted to protest and I thought, well if someone from the district came and saw how awful the school is, do you think they'd tell the principal to make new rules or go downtown to the BOE and tell them what's going on? I have no hope Jen.⁶¹ (Email correspondence, 10/13/07).

Ideally, a school wants its seniors and juniors to be proud of the school they are leaving,

⁶¹ Elizabeth's email continued: "Recently I kind of started mentoring a junior Luz. I made her a folder with all the college papers I have, like how to write a college essay, things to look for in a school etc. I'm doing this because I know the school won't. I basically just told her she has to passed down the legacy to a sophomore and so forth." Although I will address this in chapter five when I explore the concept of everyday resistance. Elizabeth's concern for younger students is indicative of her efforts to tactically cope with her school's inability to meet students' needs.

but Baldwin was quickly losing some of its most vocal and dedicated students. Often these are the students who might stand up and protest as was the case with Baldwin's student walkout. After telling me that, Jessica, a senior and the President of the school's ASPIRA club, articulated why sustaining change in high school is so difficult:

...but you know it's sad because like a lot of people who went out [to the walkout], I would have to say, were juniors and seniors, maybe some freshman and sophomores. But I know that like all the people who have been impacted or who really, really saw [the role of the protest] are graduating. You know they're just like 'wow and it's over'. They're not passing down that knowledge and then that is what is going to kill it [the motivation to protest again]. That's why I hate high school, because you have four years to make a difference. And like by the time you know you can and you know what you want to do, you are graduating and it's over (8, Interview).

Overcrowding

As I observed how middle-range students were coping with increased surveillance and security practices, I found that there were several factors contributing to the ways in which they were experiencing these new policies. Some of these factors, like the school's loss of reputation, are more abstract. Others are more concrete, like overcrowding -- a problem that contributes to lack of safety and increased violence at Baldwin. Lolo contended: "It's just a fact.... If you put five thousand kids of any color—if they're all white, if they're all black, or if they just mixed, all together in a school like that, there's gonna be tension, there's gonna be fights, it's just destined to happen.... It's unsafe" (2, Interview). As I pushed my way through the trafficked hallways on my way somewhere during period change, or when I gathered with students to enter school one morning, or when I sat in the lunchroom with all the late arrivers to sit out the first period, I found Lolo's statement to be one hundred percent on the mark. The building, as large as it was,

was suffering from too many people and no room to breathe. And it was not just what I saw, but what was fervently and consistently expressed across all interviews with students and teachers. Lloyd continued:

[Baldwin] is definitely much more crowded than they say in the papers because it's unsafe. What we're going through, the amount of kids in those hallways, it's unsafe, it really is, because what if there was an emergency, what if there's a real fire. There's no way all those kids could be evacuated, safely. I think, I think, it's hitting like, 5,500. You can see, how ridiculous, Jen, how ridiculous it is in those hallways and you're trying to walk, it's like dead lock traffic (3, Interview).

Everyone is aware that the school *is* over-crowded and also that its heavy security does little to offset the tensions that arise. Students suggest that such intensive scrutiny exacerbates tensions and fails to address fighting that occurs. Jessica elaborated: “I hate it because our school is already overcrowded so when there is a fight everyone just runs to the fight and it's just you see SSA like strolling to the fight like okay whatever, you know, whatever. I wish I had a camera.” Because Baldwin has yet to break into small schools (a popular strategy employed by the Department of Education for dealing with struggling large high schools), it remains one of the few schools required to take in every student registered in the Region. Small schools must cap their student populations at a certain size. Students at Baldwin face large class sizes and are packed into classrooms and the lunchroom. Contributing to the over-crowdedness are security-oriented policies that require students to remain in the building at all times and during lunch period (aptly named ‘captive lunch’). Hallways during period break are more than full, sometimes making it hard for students to get to class on time. Lines are long at the metal detectors and scanners. David testified the overall feeling of the school nowadays:

Now that the detectors are in, the number of students increased. Since they put them in the number of fights inside the school has increased tremendously. Every day, basically, there's a fight inside the school cuz you can't go outside to do that anymore. And generally when you have a lot of kids in one area that's going to cause confrontation cuz that's a lot of kids and you don't have like freedom and so that's why I'm saying it's gradually decreasing cuz last year wasn't as bad. There were fights, but they weren't as you know as immense as this year (19, Interview).

David's remark concluded with a reference to the school 'gradually decreasing' – a theme that many students and teachers pointed to as one of the most pernicious, but overlooked drawbacks of heavy security and surveillance inside a school.

Going Down

While Baldwin was always a school with a solid middle-tier reputation and an ability to draw a diverse cross-section of students, the increased security measures do not help to draw the City's strongest students even with its well-regarded specialized programs. Adding to tensions, these programs serve only a small fraction of the overall population and the students flooding into the school generally are not those tracked for specialized programs. Former English teacher, Mr. Greer refers to Baldwin as a city because it is so large. His department alone had over 45 English teachers.⁶² He conceded:

[The school] underwent enormous change in the time I was there. I remember when I first went there just joking and feeling it was like this surreal, like they must be putting on an entire show for me. Like it can't be like this. The hallways were really peaceful.... And then things started to change, you know.... all of a sudden we had to take students that normally we wouldn't have or students would funnel to us. They were called, referred to as, not the leftovers, not the drags, but something

⁶² Mr. Pultinas, one of Mr. Greer's English colleagues, also noted: "Yeah, and the Principal would concur on this, that a lot of the new smaller schools that have kind of emerged as part of the Chancellor's initiative and the Mayor's. They have really displaced a lot of students into the larger high schools, which, I think [Lionel] and [Baldwin] are the only two remaining in The Bronx. So, we've been obligated to take more students and also some of our more academic programs have to now compete with a lot of smaller schools that are offering better facilities and better programs and things like that. So, I think the population of our school has changed" (2-3, Interview).

similar to that, the runoffs. I think that's what it's called, we'd get runoff (2, Interview).

What Mr. Greer refers to as runoff are students with disciplinary problems who are passed along from school to school, having been suspended or expelled several times.

Because Baldwin remains one of the few large public high schools (non-specialized and not broken into small schools), it cannot refuse any student. Several of these 'runoff' students (also referred to as 'over-the-counter') wind up at Baldwin. Simultaneously, the school's ability to maintain its reputation depends on the conspicuous success of its specialized programs and that of the students and teachers who make them up.

Unfortunately, its reputation as an unsafe school has begun to surpass both its strong legacy and specialized programs. Rhina told that soon after heightened security went into effect at Baldwin she "finally got a picture in mind that school was going down when security started to come in. It wasn't really all that with the metal detectors any more. Because after [the walkout], they put a bunch of metal detectors in – but it wasn't even about that; it was about security and the harassment" (1, Interview). Rhina's sentiment that her school was beginning a slow descent in quality concurs with The Drum Major Institute's report on Impact high schools. These were the first dozen or so schools to draw the focus of the Mayor's security and surveillance policies. The report suggests that along with incidences of violence, Impact high schools were also more overcrowded than average city high schools, had less funding per student for direct services, had more over-age students for their grade, and had higher percentage of poor and Black students as compared to average NYC public high school (2005). Although Baldwin was not listed as

an Impact school, once the metal detectors were installed, it began experiencing similar problems. Mr. Greer elaborated:

this is where schools are given such a difficult job. I mean you are going to have a school that is essentially a city, right? And there's inner city kids. Most, 80 percent or something like that or if not more, are qualifying for free lunch. These are problems of poverty, problems with poverty, racism, and all the kinds of things that happen in an inner city environment. and these kids are supposed to go to class? Like that just seems like, all of a sudden in situations like that you realize that teaching metaphors and similes is like the least important thing happening in the world (4, Interview).

Not only was Baldwin's middle-tier status being jeopardized, but it was also being used to mask a larger problem of overcrowding. Rhina stated:

I think [Mayor Bloomberg] is trying to make himself look good by trying to make [Baldwin] look safer. He's trying to cover up on the outside. He's trying to paint it all white and, let it rot on the inside. ... What I want is for more people to come in and see how it is inside schools like this and see how overcrowded we are. I don't know how a school can go down so much in one year, in one semester. Not even the whole year. One semester (3, Interview).

Rhina's statement is representative of how aware students are of the politics behind school safety regulations. Fernando Carlo, from Sistas and Brothas United and someone who works closely with Bronx youth, believes that DOE officials do not take students' concerns seriously, and therefore create policies without taking their interests into consideration. He explained, "I think the number one excuse for why students aren't involved in this kind of decision-making is because 'oh, students don't know.' Well, they [students] are smart enough to realize the metal detectors aren't helping; they're smart enough to get all these other students together and walk off to the Region office and get a

meeting [on the spot], so I definitely think it [the walkout] made people jump up on their toes and realize that students know” (2, Interview).

Increasing the number of security guards on a campus does not address overcrowding and serves, in many ways, to contribute to the negative issues students are dealing with at school. In NESRI’s (2007) recent study *Deprived of Dignity*, less than one half of students reported that metal detectors make them feel better about their school, while almost every student stated that heavy police presence makes them feel like criminals because they make schools feel like jails (IV). The report asserted that instead of experiencing a greater sense of safety in and around school, and feeling part of an active and civically-minded school community, students describe feelings of danger, disillusion, and lack of freedom and respect.

One of the forgotten consequences of the school’s downward spiral was pointed out by Mr. Pultinas, an English teacher who runs the WITT program. In the summer after the first year of the school’s new policies, he told me:

Well, I guess right now one of the things I’ve noticed about the whole security issue is that it’s become more and more accepted in a kid’s eyes. Referring to the new security and surveillance regime, Pultinas claims, “It’s become almost invisible, in a way ... I mean, it’s something that I think should bother all of us, you know, this kind of acceptance of it. And almost, I question whether this is to remain or are we working toward the time when we won’t need metal detectors again? Or are we kind of accepting that this is our fate for the rest of our lives (2-3, Interview)?

Analysis: Co-occurrence and the surveillance net

The issues of overcrowding, under-funding, over surveillance, and heightened violence that I have tried to address are issues that, in the short time I was there, appeared to be occurring at the same time at Baldwin. That is to say that I was unable to draw any

conclusions as to whether these forces were converging because of one policy or another, or whether they were occurring at the same time. One must consider however that what appears as co-occurrence may also be convergence. For instance, the reality of overcrowding may in fact necessitate heightened surveillance. Instead of lowering the number of students a school can handle, however, policymakers choose to move as many students into already crowded schools – and heighten the surveillance and security protocols. These are important questions for future research.

The surveillance net, a concept I elaborated on in chapter two, does however attempt to theorize the outcome of this co-occurrence; namely, that middle-range students, whether by design or default, suffer the consequences of these co-occurring issues. As the remainder of this chapter will show, several other issues emerge because of the increase in security and surveillance – and these are the issues on which I tended to focus. This dissertation argues that as these new issues emerged in the school, students were taking notice and, as later chapters will show, responding in sophisticated and poignant ways. A good example of this can be found in the following section.

Standing in line and seeing the disparity

The photo below captures a typical morning scene at Baldwin. In order to accommodate these policy changes and get to class on time, students are expected to show up to school earlier in order to get to class before the first bell. Lolo now wakes up at 5:30 in the morning while the sky is still dark. He runs out of his apartment in the Castle Hill section of the Bronx by 6:30 and hops the 6 train southbound to 125th to catch the 4 train northbound to Mosholu Parkway, getting to his high school in the Bronx by

about 7:45. If he arrives any later, the lines outside his school prevent him from landing in his first period class by 8:15. If he is late, even by a minute, he sits in the lunchroom for the entirety of first period. Three days out of five, Lolo is late for first period. “If I get to school by 7:55, I’m not getting to class. They’ll tell me to go sit in the cafeteria. No questions,” says Lolo. On the two days a week that he finds himself in his seat for first period, he can’t believe it— “before it was like, oh my god, I can’t believe I’ve been standing here for fifteen minutes and I’m gonna be late to class. But after a while, I was like wow, it’s 8 o’clock and I’m in my seat. This is great. I can’t believe I’m getting to class on time.” Soon after metal detectors were installed, when the scanning process wasn’t running nearly as smoothly as it is today, the line was much longer. So long, in fact, that it reached from the school parking lot to [Darwin High School] -- one of the City’s top 5 most prestigious public high schools. One of the resonating themes that emerged in my conversations with students about the walkout in protest of the metal detectors was the mention of ‘the line.’



Baldwin line to get in to school through metal detectors

On the morning of the walkout, when the line to get past Baldwin's newly-installed metal detectors trailed all the way down the block, past the football and baseball fields, and in full view of Darwin, students were reminded of the disparity between what they were facing and what their counterparts at Darwin were not. This disparity is an unfortunate consequence of how the Department of Education implements its security policies and is made more obvious because of the geographic juxtaposition of the two schools. This juxtaposition resonates with Baldwin students. Rhina articulates the sting of this disparity well:

I walk past [Darwin] and I feel really bad. I walk past there everyday to take the bus and I don't feel any different than them. I'm taking honors courses, I'm in AP classes right now, double-period, I take extra-curriculars, I do community service, I go to College Now, I walk to Lehman [College] 2 days a week. I do everything that they do and more, okay, and they get to bring their cell phones and their iPods and have fun (3, Interview).

Whether they pay as close attention to their neighboring schools as Rhina does, every Baldwin student I spoke with was aware that security policy was being

implemented inconsistently across schools. In an urban school district like that of New York City, race and socio-economics are the most obvious features distinguishing good schools from bad ones. Consequently, students perceive that race is the major reason why one school has metal detectors and another does not. Lolo flatly states, “It’s very obvious they’re singling out minority schools. [Darwin] is on the same block as our school and they don’t have metal detectors and their kids can bring whatever they want.... Our school is mostly Hispanic and black and their school is mostly Asian and white” (2, Interview). In a focus group with several of his peers, Dred argues: “Most of the schools that got metal detectors are minority schools and I think it goes back to people say we’re not segregated, but it’s just like back in the day where there is black schools and there is white schools, it’s exactly what it is. There’s minority schools and there’s white schools and that’s how it’s always going to be” (17, Focus Group). While students recognize that they are not in a ‘specialized’ school, like their fortunate compatriots at Darwin, they feel just as entitled to a good education.⁶³ And why shouldn’t they? They work hard, show up to school on time, pass their classes, dream of one day attending college, and so forth. But when school surveillance policy came in it signaled that their school was ‘going down’ and students understood what that meant for their futures.

Darwin High School – a description using ethnographic methods

I was well aware of Darwin High School in the Bronx because of its reputation as one of the City’s top five schools, but I hadn’t laid eyes on it before I began my

⁶³ Mr. Greer cautioned that students had developed some interesting “mythologies” about Darwin, since the metal detectors went in. He argues that Baldwin students: “don’t know the process. They sort of feel like they’re stuck over there and we’re stuck over here ... But it’s a different kind of segregation. I mean the fact that that sort of comes down to race. It’s a lot more subtle than that and there’s a lot more, there’s a lot more agency involved than just sort of like a conspiracy” (7, Interview).

research. A highly competitive specialized public high school, 8th and 9th graders must pass an entrance exam (Specialized High School Admissions Test) to attend. There is a system of ranked scores that determines which students go to which specialized high school, if they are lucky to go at all. Out of 26,000 students taking the entrance examination only about 700 are admitted. Its campus is broader and flatter and newer than Baldwin's. It has always been situated between Baldwin and Lehman College (what had been Hunter College), and has been co-ed since 1946. Around its perimeter is a metal fence (not chain link) that extends around the entire campus. Students spend lunchtime and before and after school hanging outside the building (but inside the fence) and on the campus' grass, playing handball or Frisbee. The building and its perimeter are exquisite: nothing short of a place any parent would love to see their child. The school has an excellent reputation; amazing resources; stellar teaching staff; flush fund for expenses; and a highly competitive admissions process. The features of the building rival those of a small college.



Darwin campus

The juxtaposition of the two schools is revealing. Less than a block apart, Darwin houses about half the number of students that Baldwin does. Its mostly Asian and white students jump off the 4 train at Bedford Parkway (one stop before Mosholu) and walk two blocks into the front entrance of school in time for first period. When they enter the building, they encounter no metal detectors, few if any security guards, and no posters warning them about confiscated items. In the broad foyer, next to windows streaming sunlight into a bright entryway, sits a security guard at her station. At her desk, she monitors the outside courtyard and each corner of the school. Cameras are mounted outside the building to watch for intruders. The building extends the length of the block; long corridors feature framed school club posters and memorabilia of famous alumni. If they're late, they might text or call a friend (on their cell phones) to let them in a side entrance while going to the bathroom. I know this because in early May, after months of doing field research at Baldwin and listening to students compare their experience with those of Darwin students,⁶⁴ I decided to observe the school itself. I found my way inside the school with absolutely no trouble. In fact, as I approached a side entrance, a kindly teacher held the door open for me.

⁶⁴ When I asked students to talk about their school experience, I heard comments like Rhina's frequently: "*I bet you [Darwin] is not like this at all. I bet you.*" Because the schools are so close in proximity and so incredibly distinct, it's hard for students not to compare and contrast one with the other.



Darwin entrance

After months creeping inside and around Baldwin always on the lookout for security, I was overcome not only with how beautiful Darwin was inside, but also the freedom with which I moved through the school. The entire school *felt* differently; as did the culture of the school itself. The hallways were clean and bright. Students moved around freely both inside and outside the building. There were no cages on the windows. The stairwells were wide open. There were two plush gyms, up-to-date science labs and well-equipped computer labs; a state of the art library; an acoustically-renovated auditorium; a UFT teacher lounge room. A glance at the school's website will tell that the school has several Nobel-prize winning alumni and resources that exceed what anyone might expect of a public high school (high-speed internet access in every classroom; TV studio; rooftop planetarium; on-site Holocaust Museum; etc.).

As I walked around the building without fear of being “caught” (even though I didn't have a pass to be there) – something I'd come to fear at Baldwin (even though I

always had a pass to be there)⁶⁵ – I noticed smaller details: a clean cafeteria with vending machines and with individual chairs nicely stacked on top of tables (not tables and long benches nailed to the floor); students eating French Fries lathered with ketchup while walking down the hallway; Domino’s pizza boxes in the trash barrels; student lockers along the hallways. Why did I notice these things? Probably because these were things I recognized from my own small, Catholic high school days. And maybe also because they represented the kind of freedoms that I remember enjoying; freedoms that represented being out of middle school and in high school; freedoms that were always explained to us as ‘privileges’ that could be taken away. The other reason I noticed these things, however, was because students at Baldwin complained bitterly about their new ‘captive’ lunchroom policy. They spoke of literally starving through the day because the food choices, now that they had to remain inside the building all day, were abysmal. Although students didn’t exactly want the cookies and Snapple that the vending machines offered, they were disappointed when they had to be removed because, as Rhina told me, “They kept taking students’ money.” And, finally, I noticed these things because they were what I was not seeing at Baldwin.

The numbers

The table below highlights some basic quantitative details about Baldwin and Darwin. Since I did not conduct formal research at Darwin, or speak directly with their students or staff, I hesitate to draw too many conclusions about the numbers in this table. Rather, I use it to show some differences across a range of measured outcomes monitored

⁶⁵ One of the interesting features of close monitoring or surveillance. It conditions you to be nervous about getting caught even when you are in the right spot, at the right time. What does a trusting environment condition one to do?

and recorded by the Department of Education. Although Baldwin and Darwin are situated, literally, next door to each other -- they even share a football and baseball field -- this table may help to clarify why these schools seem to stand, figuratively, so far apart.

Table 2. A breakdown of statistics comparing two neighboring Bronx high schools.

| | Baldwin | Darwin |
|--|--|--|
| Student population | 4,467 (under-reported) ⁶⁶ | 2,417 ⁶⁷ |
| Attendance Year to Date | 80.0% | 96.1 |
| Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch | 90.8% | 22.4% |
| 9th Graders reading at Level | 37.9% | 98.8% |
| Graduation Rate (4 years) | 69.6% | 97.7% |
| Suspensions -- (as compared to averages similar schools)⁶⁸ | 91/138 (66%) | 29/176 (16%) |
| Spending on security | 790,827 school safety (SSA) | 457,500 school safety (SSA) |
| Spending on school aids & support staff | 1,453,000 | 1,360,000 |
| Overcrowding⁶⁹ | 140% | 102% |
| Security policy | Video cameras (no monitors in sight), Metal detectors, scanning wands, School Security Agents (SSA), School Aids, NYPD | ID scanning machines, Security Guard at entrance, 2-3 NYPD/SSA, Video cameras (monitors at security guard station) |

Note: data is collected from 2004-2005 DOE reports and InsideSchools.org, an independent guide to NYC schools. I had to rely on the latter because the DOE reports are dated.

Much of the information on this table was shown in chapter two, when I used it to show how a middle-tier high school was situated statistically among an upper and lower-tier school. In this context, however, I draw upon the table to reveal obvious disparities between the two schools. Baldwin has twice as many students and serves a low-income

⁶⁶ American Indian 0.27%; Asian / Pac. Isl 5.69%; Hispanic 63.85%; Black 25.72%; White 3.31%; Not Reported 1.16%

⁶⁷ American Indian 0.41%; Asian / Pac. Isl 51.14%; Hispanic 6.37%; Black 4.72%; White 28.38%; Not Reported 8.98%

⁶⁸ InsideSchools.org defines “suspensions” as showing: “An approximation of the number of students suspended for misbehavior in the 2004-2005 school year. In general, a low number means a school has a good overall climate, while a high number suggests a school is unruly. However, a new principal who is struggling to bring a school under control will sometimes suspend lots of students; a high number may reflect a get-tough policy. The avg. for similar schools on the next line is the average number of suspensions for similar-sized school.”

⁶⁹ InsideSchools.org defines “overcrowding” as: “Schools at 100 percent capacity have the same number of children enrolled as the building was designed to accommodate. Those over 100 percent are overcrowded; those under 100 percent may have unused space. However, these numbers are approximate and should only be taken as a rough guide as to building conditions. For example, the data may not take into account the fact that some schools have special education classes that only hold a few students (and therefore seem to have room according to the data, while in fact they are at capacity), while other schools may have increased their capacity by converting offices to classrooms (and therefore are not as crowded as the numbers suggest).”

population of mostly Latino and Black youth. Only about 40% of entering freshman can read at grade level, but about 70% of its students graduate on time (the average citywide is 53.4%). The school is at 140% capacity in terms of overcrowding and suspends close to three times the number of students as Darwin. From 2002 to 2005, the student population increased from 3,772 to 4,524. (Students, teachers, and staff suggest that this number is more like 5,000). Many of these new students (ELL & Special Ed) were those turned away by the large Bronx high schools converting to smaller schools with limited capacity.

Security staffing as representative of bigger disparities

Baldwin uses almost twice as much of its resources to pay for security than does Darwin. This includes the salaries of school safety agents (SSA) and likely includes expensive surveillance equipment (video cameras, metal detectors, ID scanning machines, etc.). SSA are employees of the New York Police Department (NYPD), but receive minimal training, and are responsible for school security both inside and outside the building. They are under the authority of the NYPD so they do not report to the principal or the assistant principal. The SSA are those who monitor the metal detectors/scanners and, though they don't carry guns, Rhina told me, "they can arrest any one at any time including students and teachers, on duty and off duty." They are distinguished from the regular Security Guards by a three-striped shoulder patch. They are the lowest ranked officers of the NYPD, "the Riker's-hired officers," stated Elizabeth, "they're crazy – they think that we're the criminals. And that's how we're treated."

Interestingly, both schools spend almost equal amounts on school aids and support

staff, but even a cursory look suggests that the two schools use these resources very differently and for a different number of students. School aids are individuals hired to monitor hallways and make sure students are inside their appropriate classrooms. The bigger the population of the students, the higher number of school aids. School aids are not the same as School Security Advisors (SSA)⁷⁰ as they are, like Deans, under the supervision of the Assistant Principal, but they receive no formal training for being in a school. They tend to fill gaps. Like Deans, whose first role is that of teacher, school aids provide some low-level security, but are **not** monitoring the metal detectors or any other security apparatus. Aids check program cards and help impose the rules (i.e. getting to class on time; no card-playing; no baseball caps; monitoring the lunchroom; etc.) – but they do not tend to command respect among students. Elizabeth recounted a story in which she saw one of the school aids hanging out on her block flirting with girls, smoking a blunt [marijuana cigar]. She indignantly told me that it was impossible to respect someone like that when you see them in the hallways of your school enforcing rules on the weekdays and on your block on the weekends. School aids are somewhat notorious inside and outside of schools for helping students bring confiscated items such as MP3 players into the school since they don't have to pass through the metal detectors upon entering. And it is not hard to catch them flirting with girls in the hallways; unnecessarily harassing boys for their bathroom passes or program card; and generally goofing off with other school aids in the hallways. School aids have little authority, but at a school like Baldwin, they have a clear presence due to the sheer numbers of them. On

⁷⁰ In this high school there are several layers of security – New York Police Officers (NYPD), School Safety Agents (SSA), Security Guards, Deans/hallway monitors.

an average day, I would pass between four and six school aids on a given floor. School aids tend to be male and, in some cases, they are former students and come from the communities from which the students come. Rhina told me, “you know the kids who look like kids, they’re the school aids. They’re the ones that are immature and start making noise around the school. And then the deans ... they’re supposed to be teachers, first.”

At Darwin, I did not see a single school aid or dean on the premises of campus. I saw one NYPD officer roaming the hallways and one SSA officer at the front desk monitoring the outside cameras. The fact that both schools spend equal amounts on school aids and support staff suggests that one school puts its resources for support staff (counselors, tutors, librarians, etc.) and the other school puts its resource for school aids. At Baldwin, students noted the disparity – security was plentiful but educational resources, such as extra college counselors (there was one counselor per 200 students), were becoming increasingly scarce. In a survey conducted by New York City’s Urban Youth Collaborative, “77% of students in large high schools and 63% of students in small schools said that they are never, rarely or only sometimes able to see a guidance counselor when they need to” (NESRI/Sullivan, 2007).

Security at Baldwin

The visible presence of high or low-level security on school campus is significant for a variety of reasons. DOE officials insist that their security goals are to increase safety and reduce violence on school campuses. One of the ways to increase safety is to increase the presence of security staff at all levels (SSA, school aids, deans, technology).

However, students suggest otherwise. David is one of the most vocal in terms of how he

perceives problems having to do with security staff. He reported on one problem I heard repeated by several students:

Their tactics are unfair ... Let's say they [SSA] have like a friendship with one of the students. That student can be walking down the hall obviously doing something bad and they'll just be all 'oh what up? how ya doing?' and then like another kid'll be walking down the hall just going to the bathroom or to an office and it's like 'where you're going?' ... The only kids they're friends with are the ones who don't go to class. If you don't go to class, you hang out in the halls, you hang out in a gang or something like that, they'll be cool with you. But if you look like you actually care about school they don't like you (20, Interview).

One of the issues that fails to garner attention is the quality of staff security itself.

David continued: “A lot of the time, these security aids, they're like they just graduated themselves so they're real young and they just want to fit in” (20, Interview). Mr.

Pultinas noted how, along with the changes in policy (captive lunch and metal detectors), security forces impact a school:

You know, there's kind of a presence, the security... You know, whenever you have so much security, there is a kind of a pose, I guess that goes with the teams of the occupation, and kind of an attitude towards peace keeping that's kind of embodied in all of the security officers and to some extent, to some of the Deans as well.... during the change of period ... there's yelling to try to move people. Some SOs and Deans have whistles, so I think all of that adds a certain tension that the kids, you know, they absorb and I'm sure that some of them find that they're provoked and antagonized by that whole security arrangement (4, Interview).

The scholar Pedro Noguera has argued that responses to school violence often fail because they don't take into account the importance of supportive, positive relationships between students and adults. In schools where students and teachers felt safe, Noguera notes, the agenda was to “pursue strategies that insure that all students are known by adults and feel supported” (151). Echoing Noguera's findings, I found that Baldwin

students did not object to the presence of authority figures, such as SSA or school aids, if they felt respected and supported by them. Unfortunately, the majority of what I heard and observed indicated that students were being regularly disrespected by security. Dred told me about the change of guard that occurred once the metal detectors came in. Accompanying the new equipment were new security guards who “came in with this whole attitude. They thought we were just militant kids so they had to go be harsh, be tough so they know we’re serious here and no respect. I am also the type of person who demands respect. So, you know, you give respect, you expect it to. If a person respects you, you respect them.” When I asked him about the difference, he told me: “Like all the new ones who came in, they didn’t know who we were. All they know is that we got new metal detectors because there was supposedly violent crimes in the school [and] that we protested [against the detectors]” (17, Focus Group).

Through my interviews with students, it became clear that they want adults in their lives who make an effort to understand them. They often made mention of how long a particular security guard had been with the school and whether or not they seemed to take their role working with students seriously. Lloyd elaborated on the difference between the old security guards and the new ones (those who came in with/after the metal detectors. For him:

[The problems arose with] all the new ones ... cuz all schools have security guards, whether there’s more in one school or not, but the ones that’s been there, before the metal detectors and stuff, they feel us, they know what we’re going through because they knew how much freedom we had. This wasn’t a gradual process. They didn’t take one thing away after another. They took everything away. They took everything away and said “That’s it, you’re gonna have to deal with it. They didn’t take one thing away and—they took everything away, so the guards that’s been there

since I was a freshman, since I remember, they know us and like ‘Man, these kids are serious.’ But the new ones, those guys are assholes. Like, they really don’t care (6, Interview).

More than anything, though, I found that students generally were impressed with security guards who knew the rules and imposed them, as opposed to those who made up the rules arbitrarily so as to punish a particular student. After witnessing or being involved in several incidents at the metal detectors, Rhina finally located the Sergeant in charge of school security. Upon investigating, she found out that security is “not supposed to make you take off your Tims [Timberland boots]” but they do it to avoid having to scan every students’ feet and, Rhina attested, “because it makes their lives easier.” When she learned this, Rhina realized that she did not know what her rights were with regard to these issues. She went in search of the head of security because she was “the one that really matters, she’s the one that’s supposed to tell the security and deans what they’re supposed to do because she’s paid by the police department.” After being told by one security guard that “everything that’s allowed at the airport is allowed here,” Rhina “skipped class and ran to the Sergeant’s office and ended up having a full interview [with her]. And I asked her ... ‘is this true? is this true?’ None of that was true. We’re not allowed to pull down our pants. She said, [the] ‘airport is different than school. It’s optional to take off your Tims.’ And I said, did you know *this* is happening and she said, ‘I heard about some situations happening. and I told them they’re not allowed to do that.’ And I said, did you know *this* is happening, and she’s like, ‘no I didn’t know that.’”

Unlike the Sergeant whose training was at the New York Police Academy, many of the SSAs had trained at the nearby Juvenile Detention Prison (Riker’s Island) and had

no experience working with kids. This rankled many of students. In a focus group, students noted that some of the old security guards or school aids (who had been at the school before the metal detectors were installed) had “changed” since the new policies went into effect. They suggested that the new policies and technologies in place at the school had made these individuals behave more harshly towards students. For instance, Rafael told me about an incident in which a student who “looks like a calm kid, a very cool guy” was handcuffed “because he was walking into class 2-3 minutes late and they told him to stop and he refused to stop. He pointed to the class he was about to step in, and they were like ‘give me your program card’ and he was like ‘no, I’m going to be late for class’ and they still pulled him out of class [and handcuffed him]. There was about 4-6 security guards on him and they took him down to the dean’s office and I’m not sure if he got taken away” (1, Interview).

This incident, and several like them, serve to suggest that top-down security policies, such as those implemented through the Department of Education, provide on-site security staff with a protocol to treat every infraction the same. This creates an endless stream of rules that become harder to enforce, or haphazardly imposed, as the full range of student experience is monitored. Students begin to notice who gets stopped more in the hallways; who gets questioned for their bathroom pass more often; who gets to squeeze past school aids standing guard because they’re cute; who gets to bring in their cell phones because they’re friends with security. For middle-range students, these inconsistencies stand out. Prone to following the rules in order to succeed, these students detest the inconsistencies and the inability to complain to authority. These micro-level

inconsistencies prove to be a contributing factor in undermining actual safety and security at school.

Students also see inconsistencies on the macro level. Baldwin's proximity to Darwin elevates these inconsistencies to the surface of New York City's racially divided school system. In an urban public school system such as New York City's, low income youth of color, especially Blacks and Latinos, encounter school safety and security policy at its most intensive, revealing a particularly racialized response to school-based safety and security problems. Unfortunately, studies have found that schools disproportionately target students of color for suspensions, expulsions, and other punishments (Nolan, 2007; NYCLU, 2007; NESRI, 2007; JPI, 2000; Noguera, 2000; Dorhn, 2000). In 2001, for instance, the suspension rate in New York City high schools was 8.3% for African American students, 4.8% for Latinos, and only 2.5% for White students (NESRI, 2007).

It is not hard to see that Baldwin and Darwin high schools exist on opposite poles in terms of DOE surveillance and security policy. One has permanent metal detectors and scanners, an army of security personnel, and aggressively enforced zero tolerance policies—accounting for more suspensions, more court-ordered summonses, and higher drop-out rates. The other has no metal detectors, one security guard monitoring the grounds *outside* the school for threats, and an open campus policy in which students have access to the grounds at all hours of the day. According to Baldwin students, the disparate versions of surveillance policy happening across schools and the privileges their neighbors are afforded points to one common denominator: Darwin is mostly “white and

Asian and [Baldwin] is mostly black and Hispanic”⁷¹ (Lolo, Elizabeth, Rhina). By initiating a sense of distrust, school-based surveillance acts as a separator -- setting students apart from other students – not only within a school, but across schools.

Analysis: Understanding the security disparity by locating the threat

The students’ explanation for why surveillance policy is intensive at Baldwin and practically non-existent at Darwin is based on their personal experience with being watched under the gaze of suspicion. For many youth of color, this gaze now follows them from their heavily policed neighborhoods to their heavily policed schools. But it also points to an unspoken issue undergirding these policies; one that has to do with where a school identifies its biggest threat to safety. Recalling that Baldwin’s cameras are on the inside, while Darwin’s are on the outside, we might ask: Is the threat to safety and security *inside* the school or *outside* the school? From whom are students and staff being protected?⁷² Rafael recounted an incident involving his friend that was often referred to by other students:

They [SSA] kept telling her to take articles [of clothing] off and it was the wire in her bra, so she didn’t expose anything, she walked out, but she was like, ‘I’m telling you, it’s my bra wire, and they were like ‘you’re gonna have to buy new bras then’. And she got really mad. [SSA] think we could do harm with a bra wire. Yeah, they think we’ll go to that extreme. That we’re THAT bad that we’ll put a weapon inside a bra (10-11, Interview).

The logical conclusion Rafael draws from this story is straightforward: *they think we’re that bad*. Underlying the stories is a deep resentment and hurt; a desire to be heard

⁷¹ “Since the beginning of the nation, white Americans have suffered from a deep inner uncertainty as to who they really are. One of the ways that has been used to simplify the answer has been to seize upon the presence of black Americans and use them as a marker, a symbol of limits, a metaphor for the “outside.” Many whites could look at the social positions of blacks and feel that color formed an easy and reliable gauge for determining to what extent one was or was not American” (Ellison, “What American Would be Like Without Blacks”, 1970).

⁷² In Biloxi, Mississippi, teachers in the district willingly submitted to the installation of surveillance cameras in more than 500 classrooms. Teachers were quoted as saying that they saw the cameras “not as an invasion but as a protection” (Dillon, 2003). But protection from what?

and treated fairly. In his study of working-class resistance on Birmingham's busses and streetcars, historian Robin D.G. Kelley reminds us that "sitting with whites, for most black riders, was never a critical issue; rather African Americans wanted more space for themselves, they wanted to receive equitable treatment, they wanted to be personally treated with respect and dignity, they wanted to be heard and possibly understood, they wanted to get to work on time, and above all, they wanted to exercise power over institutions that controlled them or on which they were dependent" (75). In the same way, Baldwin students do not necessarily want to sit among Darwin students – they express love and loyalty for their school and each other -- but they want to be treated with equal amounts of respect and dignity by the City's school system. And they understand the consequences of being treated unfairly. When it comes to security in the school, Ben told me: "They have no respect for us whatsoever. That was my definition of disrespect ... to try to prove that you have more power over someone else and that's what they try to do, that's like their life mission, to prove they're above us, I don't understand it" (16, Focus Group). In reference to how students are 'greeted' in the mornings, Mr. Pultinas elaborated:

Greet is really kind of a mild term to how some of the SOs kind of, you know, bring people into the building. It's not about greeting, it's really about getting them through the system as fast and as efficiently as possible. But there's also a lot of looks of oblivion on some of the Security Officers ... like they're neither here nor there, you know. Kind of like an indifference, I suppose would be the term (4, Interview).

Feelings of disrespect and indifference washed over me sometimes as well.

Though markedly different than how students experience security staff, I did my best to be in the company of at least a few students as often as possible. In small ways, I was

able to assess how it might feel to be eyed as a threat to the community in which I entered. Even though I was at the school weekly, I was held up regularly by security – questioned about where I was headed, my ID checked. I was often in a bit of a hurry and it always felt as if the security guards were purposefully ignoring me as I stood in front of them, waiting to check in. On every occasion, my bags were searched, and I was consistently wanded down by a female security agent. When and if I was caught wandering around the hallways, I was confronted by school aids and SSA. Mounted video cameras appeared everywhere around the school, but I'd never seen the monitors. When I approached the side entrances to try to enter the building, a security guard on the inside would tell me to go around. When I left the campus in the afternoon, often in the company of students, we walked past security guards on the inside and outside entrances, walkways, and streets around Baldwin. When staff wasn't shouting at students to move, they were generally following them throughout the campus.

This feeling of enclosure and being unwanted is well-expressed by Elizabeth: “If you would walk outside when the late bell rings, you would hear [the security staff yelling] ‘Get out. Go home. Go home ... They do not want us there. And even when we're inside the building, they do not want us there. So it's a constant ‘I don't want you here, typa thing.’” On the corner closest to the subway a police officer monitored dismissal and, on several occasions, a few police trucks stood to ensure that students left the campus towards the subway as soon as possible. The threat at Baldwin, it became clear, was inside the school. No cameras are mounted outside the building looking for potential criminals who might enter; instead they are mounted in the stairwells inside the

building. The threat was the students themselves and they were perceived as a threat not only to themselves but to the surrounding community.

By contrast, Darwin's campus is incredibly unmonitored and porous. With a student population of 2,500, only two NYPD/SSA circulate throughout campus. Because the school is so seemingly open and trusting of its student and staff populations, the threat at this school appears to exist *outside* the building. The school's security and safety practices reflect this; for instance, a security agent is posted at the entrance of school, watching the monitors which records activity *outside* the building.

Analysis: Urban Youth as Threat

By considering the ways in which urban youth of color are pathologized as threatening and suspicious, we can see school safety and surveillance policy as playing a role in reinforcing and reproducing a larger cultural phenomenon that uses surveillance to control and contain undesired populations. These policies are not only unsound, they are unjust: They are applied most frequently in racially segregated urban schools and surrounding poor communities. The disparate versions of surveillance policy occurring even within one district (New York City) signals a particularly racialized response to security (NYCLU, 2007; NESRI/Sullivan, 2007; Balmer, 2006; Mediratta, 2006; NCSC, 2006; DMI, 2005; Noguera, 1995). From a political and economic perspective, low income youth of color are seen as redundant, non-contributors to the declining labor market (Anyon, 2005). The very presence of urban youth, Giroux contends, prompts in the public imagination a "rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance" (2003, 554). Loic Wacquant insists that schools and other institutions are called on to use the information

and human means they possess to exercise close surveillance on ‘problem populations’ (84, 2001).

As addressed in previous chapters, urban youth of color are effectively targeted by punitive public policies – from zero tolerance to the criminalization of adolescence. At other times, they are ignored altogether by the system – from anti-poverty legislation to poor apartheid urban schools. Urban youth do not benefit from the protections and benevolent gazes of the public. Instead, they tend to be maligned as a group, made to seem older than they are, and penalized in a system that no longer encourages rehabilitation or re-entry, but lock up. Bernadine Dohrn (2000) insists that nowadays,

behaviors that were once punished or sanctioned by the school vice-principal, family members, a neighbor, or a coach are more likely to lead to an adolescent being arrested, referred to juvenile or criminal court, formally adjudicated, incarcerated in a detention center, waived or transferred to adult criminal court for trial, sentenced under mandatory sentencing guidelines, and incarcerated with adults (158, Dohrn; Sickmund et al., 1997).

She later claims that through changes in criminal and juvenile law, adolescent behavior has been criminalized; what she refers to as the “sinister criminalization of childhood” is now part of the fabric of basic life and permeates the schools, the parks and neighborhoods, child protection, and health care (158-159). She cautions us to consider that outrageous outburst or no outburst at all, in schools or in public spaces, youth and their behaviors are rarely seen in positive light. K-Swift, a 21-year old African American and member of Urban Word NYC, picked up on this theme. He told me that he thinks “pre-teens are looked at more like innocent and are to be protected until they are like 10 years old or until they do something and then often times they’re treated like adults.”

Not surprisingly, the youth research participants I interviewed, all of whom are what I have characterized as middle-range, believe that being poor and of color often means that they will be eyed suspiciously in their neighborhood, in stores, and in other public places. Asked how they think they, as urban teenagers, are perceived by authority, they enumerated the following adjectives: “up to no good. hoodlums. felonists, delinquents. loud trouble-makers, criminals, deviants, either selling drugs or wanna be future rappers, wearing baggy jeans and hoodies, or short skirts if you’re a girl.” In other words, if these students knowingly wear baggy jeans, oversized hooded sweatshirts or coats, and large diamond studs in their ears, they know they are going to fit the predominant stereotype of youth as hoodlum, felon, delinquent, criminal. And as David testifies: “if you look like a description, if you look suspicious, you’ll be confronted most of the time” (21, Interview). Misrecognized as a ‘hoodlum’ again and again, youth are faced with a choice. K~Swift suggests that they often opt to fulfill the stereotype: “you wanna box me in and think all this bad shit about me [then] I’m just gonna be your worst nightmare. You asked for it.”

On the other end of this misrecognition are efforts by urban youth to be recognized as anything other than a threat. Many of the students I interviewed recounted stories of when they enter a store and make eye contact with the security guard or clerk. Some of these will be addressed further in chapter four. Here, however, Enmanuel, a Dominican student who is from Washington Heights and also a member of Urban Word NYC, reminds us that efforts to be seen in a positive light are not so easily won:

like yesterday I got off the subway and was going through one of the big turnstiles where you have to push and there were people behind me and

*this old lady behind me and she was bumped out the way by one of the poles and then I go to apologize, even though it wasn't my fault, and she turns around and starts screaming at me. She's like 'you see, that's what's wrong with New York, nobody cares....' She's just going off on this big rant, not even trying to hear that I'm saying sorry. She sees I'm young... whatever the case may be, and then she boxed me... I'm **right in front of her** [emphasis his], telling her I'm sorry and all this ... and she's just not hearing me. I'm invisible. That's it (18, Interview).*

Finally, youth are often seen as more threatening when they are 'hanging out' with other youth. Many of the young women I spoke about being misrecognized as a 'bad kid' talked about how it was often through their association with other youth that they became labeled or monitored themselves. When I asked Rhina about being watched in her neighborhood of Co-op city, the Bronx, she told me she notices it most when she's *with* the "stereotypical urban kid the kind of kid that lives in the projects but looks like he has money. Where does he get that money? Those are the kids that they watch the most." This applied also to Lolo who, while we were walking down 5th Avenue around 14th street, began pointing to the stores (Banana Republic, Coach, the Gap, etc.) in which he'd been followed by security. He complained that it was worse when he was with his father because his dad had darker skin than he had and did not look that old. He also told me that it always seemed as if the Black and Latino security guards were the worst when it came to this. When I asked him how it would be if he and I walked into one of these stores together he told me that he'd be less watched because I was a white woman – somewhat older – who didn't look like a threat.

A generation of suspects

Sociologist Mike Males has chronicled the framing of California youth as criminals and suspects. His careful study of police reports, prison statistics, popular

culture and media representations, and crime policy and discourse reveals two things: a pattern of declining youth crime rates and rising adult crime rates and an increased hysteria and fear of youth (66-67, *Framing Youth*).⁷³ What explains this discord? Why would fear of youth increase at the same time that their role in crime was shrinking? Males suggests that youth – particularly urban youth – serve as ‘scapegoats’ within the context of neoliberalism. With a retreat and closure of social programs for the poor throughout the 1980’s and 90’s (such as welfare, public education, after-school programs etc.), local and federal policymakers have turned towards policy which aims to control and contain youth. Unfortunately many of these policies fail to reduce crime. One example of this, Males found, was in the adoption of a daytime curfew policy initiated by a small but racially and economically stratified town in California. Police data from 1992-1997 show that “after adopting the curfew, Monrovia experienced a 53 percent increase in juveniles arrested for non-curfew crimes” (73). Males found that the curfews did not cut crime, but produced more arrests – the bulk of which were African American and Latino youths who “were slapped with 70 percent of the curfew citations, a rate

⁷³ Since it peaked in 1993-4, the only discernible juvenile crime trend has been a continuing decline in the rate and numbers of youth arrested for serious offenses. Despite the call to toughen laws to prevent further school shootings and teen killings, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's latest count of juvenile arrests shows that there was a 56% decline in juvenile homicide arrests between 1993 and 1998 (JPI, 2000). Several studies since July 1998 have shown that the vast majority of America's schools are effectively free from serious crime, and that less serious forms of school crime appear to be on the decline, along with other manifestations youth violence. CJCJ reported that during the 1998-1999 school year (in which the Columbine shooting occurred), the National School Safety Center reported that there were 26 school associated violent deaths-- a 40% decline from the previous year. An analysis of surveys of students, teachers and law enforcement in 1998 showed that they found the schools in their communities to be safe. For almost two decades, even before the highly publicized school shootings of the 1990’s, schools across the country have implemented a range of zero tolerance-oriented prevention strategies to secure their school buildings, staff, and students. Additionally, a number of legislative and policy changes have been enacted in the name of school safety; many of these changes include a component of surveillance at their strategic core. For instance, CJCJ reports that in addition to the hiring of school police and security officers, the use of students identification and tracking devices, and the installation of metal detectors and cameras (details of is the subject of this dissertation), “two thirds of state legislatures have enacted some form of legislation since 1996 to erode confidentiality provisions concerning children who commit offenses, a protection which is a major tenet of the juvenile justice system's focus on rehabilitation” (Policy Brief, 2002). CJCJ also cites the use of FBI "student profiling" software to determine the characteristics of students prone to violence.

nearly double that of whites.” After the curfew took effect, “more than half of all offenses committed by nonwhite youth were curfew violations” (72).

Throughout his research, Males asks: “what is it about American adults of the late 1990s that yearns to sweep all juveniles off the street, daytime and nighttime?”(81) One possible answer to Males’ question might read: the more visible urban youth are, the more American adults think they need protection from them. And yet, as Henry Giroux argues, urban youth no longer play a role in the shaping of our democratic society. safe.¹ Giroux contends that within the last decade, “youth have become public enemy number one” – showing up as culprits of violence in the press, movies and television, and research by conservatives (556). The popular perception of youth, especially youth of color, is that of a “generation of suspects” (557). The symbolic and literal role that youth play in shaping public discourse and policy both inside schools, but also inside their own communities is almost entirely negative.⁷⁴ Because adults in authority express so much hostility towards young people, Giroux contends, our social policies represent the “shrinking democratic public spheres, the hijacking of civic culture, and the increasing militarization of public space” (554) and offer youth few options. Inside urban schools, students are confronted with more standardized tests than ever, under-qualified teachers, and over-crowded classrooms, hallways, and auditoriums. Outside schools, youth have nowhere to hang out freely. With less incentive and funding to attend after-school

⁷⁴ Sadly this is confirmed by my work and research with urban youth of color. When I asked each of my research participants to characterize how they thought adults perceived urban teenagers, they enumerated the following descriptors: “up to no good, hoodlums, felonists, delinquents, loud trouble-makers, criminals, deviants, either selling drugs or wanna-be future rappers, wearing baggy jeans and hoodies, or short skirts if you’re a girl.”

programs, they risk being confronted by police, getting swept up in the doings of neighborhood gangs, and dropping out of school altogether.

We are witnessing a moment in which schools are becoming spaces for the monitoring of a pre-existing threat, where public policy trends and private surveillance technologies are tested on youth bodies. These youth are *already framed* by suspicion (Ruck et al, 2005; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003; Garland, 2001; Males, 1996; Noguera 1995)⁷⁵. In other words, because public schools are occupied by youth, and youth are to be feared when they cannot be elided, the school becomes an enclave, to be feared as a whole. Inside these enclaves, students must be entirely controlled. Surveillance and security policy operates within this negative feedback loop. The role that surveillance plays in this context is complex. It offers multiple ways for the ‘generation of suspects’ to be controlled and contained.

Ironically, these control and containment provisions have heightened the fear of those in and around schools, especially that felt by students and their parents. CJCJ reported a study by the Department of Special Education at the University of Maryland that found that students at schools which employed "secure building" strategies to combat crime (including metal detectors and locker searches) were more likely to be afraid and be victimized than those attending schools which used less restrictive school safety measures. This finding is consistent with recent NYCLU and NESRI reports that focused on New York City schools. They are also consistent with my own data on the

⁷⁵ In NYC schools and school policy, remnants of a disciplinary society can be found in forms of surveillance leveled at the body (security officers, metal detectors, etc.). These forms of surveillance although dying out (as the National Institute of Justice grant seeking “non-cooperative” versions of monitoring alerts us)⁷⁵ still exist in schools today. The emergence of a control society, as it is manifesting itself in schools, can be found in the usage of surveillance cameras (in which the footage is actually looked at), RFID tracking student movement, confiscation of technology that has the potential to ‘watching from below’ such as cell phones/cameras, and standardized tests used to track students based on test scores.

consequences of pervasive surveillance on the safety and well-being of urban youth.

Ultimately, many scholars argue that it is the intensification of zero tolerance policies that actually creates the conditions for which crime by youth is exacerbated (Giroux, 2003; ABA, 2001; Casella, 2001; Dohrn, 2000; Males, 1999).

Conclusion

Because they are misrecognized as a population to be feared, students in New York City schools have found themselves in the middle of a surveillance net. Within a context of heightened social insecurity and economic polarization brought on by neoliberal, global economic policy, enclave schools with a history of violence, and middle tier schools alike, have become sites of control and containment; less so of education and possibility. While Wacquant is right to suggest that institutions such as schools exercise close surveillance on ‘problem populations’, it is also true that problem populations are not the only casualty of our society’s irrational fear of urban teenagers and our thirst for protection from them. The surveillance net helps extend his theory and consider the ways that middle-range students suffer too. The economy of fear that surrounds urban youth is fostered by what Garland refers to as the ‘criminologies of everyday life’ and ‘the dangerous other’. This focus on the ‘problem populations’ has produced zero tolerance and heightened surveillance policy that impacts everyone, not just problem students. Garland further contends that society is now driven by a logic of retribution, not one of prevention. Once again, schools exist in the slippage between the two logics. On one hand policymakers and school administrators claim that metal detectors and cameras help to *prevent* crime, but their implementation effectively disables

the school's (its administrators and teachers) ability to address crime and violence on its own terms. The surveillance net captures every student, treats all crime as equal, and makes no distinction in terms of punishment. In this way, school surveillance policy and practice is operating from within a retributive framework – one that feeds off the pathology of urban youth as dangerous. Not only are students within these institutions being misrecognized as oriented towards crime, their efforts at being heard and recognized are often pathologized as criminal (at worst) or negatively resistant (at best) as well.

This chapter has tried to show that existing in these schools are smart and savvy students – increasingly aware of how their school's chosen policies are ill-serving them and their peers. Part of the recognition of Baldwin students seemed to come from their proximity to Darwin, a high functioning, well-resourced school in the vicinity. But part of the awareness of Baldwin students also seems to stem from the subtle and obvious forms of racism and racial profiling they face daily in and outside their neighborhoods, in public and private spaces. Increasingly, students are recognizing these dynamics in their public schools. How they cope, struggle, and survive with the fear, harassment, and racism and also how they formulate active resistance are the subject of the final two chapters.

Chapter Four – *Forms of student resistance to surveillance*

Background

The tragedies of Columbine and September 11th have forced public schools to step up surveillance practices—producing an environment with less freedom and more control. Sociologist Delario Lindsay writes, “What the ‘War on Terror’ and its associative social control measures illustrates is the willingness on the part of those charged with securing the nation to resort to any means necessary in accomplishing that task. The goal is security; the reality is one of control” (Lindsay, 2004, 323).

Urban students experience surveillance in myriad forms, ranging from the spectacular to the quotidian; it exerts a continual, if not intermittent, influence on their school and community life. This chapter will review the way students describe these experiences, as it begins to shed light on the complexity of surveillance in the lives of urban teenagers. ‘Being watched’ does not always appear threatening to urban teens. But as I have argued thus far, getting caught in the ‘net’ of surveillance implies significant, perhaps unseen consequences for youth of color – consequences of which many teens are all too aware.

The youth I interviewed and observed are sensitive to the Janus face of surveillance. They believe it can protect them in certain circumstances (students no longer seem to worry about knives and guns in school). But in other contexts, the fact of surveillance creeps in and takes something. It unsettles and prods. It observes on the one hand, and profiles on the other. Whereas one kind of watching feels protective; another

feels punitive. Rafael, a Baldwin student, summarized the difference between surveillance and observation:

*Surveilling is watching like stalking almost. Like if I was to observe you, I would observe you only for this moment. Surveillance is constant, often. Like if they was to observe me, they would observe the hair, or how my nose is always runny ... **But if they was to be surveilling, they'd find out my habits.** I like drawing. I write with a grafitti handstyle or I take the train home. Stuff that they're not supposed to know out of observation” (13, Interview).⁷⁶*

Perhaps justified, Rafael's paranoia speaks to the power that surveillance has on these youth -- the insidious fear that they may become the subjects of an investigation that is at once arbitrary and systematic. His fear reflects the experiential core of Foucault's claim that disciplinary power “makes almost any behavior punishable and thus the object of attention, surveillance, and control” (28, Staples, 2000).

Marshmallow effect

In his book *Maximum Security* (1996), John Devine chronicles how student violence in New York City's public school system has become normalized. Devine suggests that youth violence increases as school personnel (administrators, teachers, security) relinquish responsibility for reprimanding and controlling students. He argues that schools have become sites which ignore student violence altogether or evade it by unleashing a regime of technological surveillance devices such as metal detectors and scanning machines. The cumulative effect is a distancing of school personnel from student bodies. Devine contends that because behavioral rules are never enforced by

⁷⁶ **sur-veil-lance** –noun. 1. a watch kept over a person, group, etc., esp. over a suspect, prisoner, or the like: *The suspects were under police surveillance.* 2. supervision or superintendence. [Origin: 1790–1800; < F, equiv. to *surveill(er)* to watch over (*sur-* sur-¹ + *veiller* < L *vigil-re* to watch; see *vigil*) + *-ance* -ance] *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1), Random House Unabridged Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2006.*

teachers and administrators, the school systems' rules produce a phenomenon he refers to as the "marshmallow effect"—"where students [push] a rule, the system, like a marshmallow, [gives] way" (p. 109).

My research suggests otherwise. Although I agree with Devine's analysis of the distancing of school personnel from students, I have found that the "system"—perhaps better understood as a constellation of overlapping systems—performs less like a marshmallow and more like an intractable, yet ineffectual police state. This occurs through an *ad hoc* coalition of unwavering protocol, sophisticated surveillance technologies and a range of security personnel with differing levels of training and authority, who may or may not follow the protocol, or use the technology appropriately. Students frequently reported that it is the combination of protocol, personnel (several layers of security officials) *and* technology (scanners and metal detectors) at the entrance, exits, and in the hallways that makes school an often humiliating experience.

Taking a different approach, Pedro Noguera (1995) has argued that commonly practiced safety measures, such as the use of surveillance cameras, metal detectors, and security officials, tend to perpetuate instead of reduce violence. Noguera argues that "when the perceptions and experiences of students are not taken into account, the policies adopted to help young people often miss the mark and may even generate greater polarization and antipathy toward authority figures" (150).

The effect of the uncertain coalition of protocol, technology, and security agents lends itself to Foucault's basic claim that disciplinary power is always multi-directional – circulating throughout the social body – and is not simply repressive, but also productive.

Of course, the goal of disciplinary power and surveillance procedures is to ensure obedience, or what Foucault calls “docile” bodies. But this chapter will argue that this coalition has accidentally ‘produced’ something else entirely. Youth subjects are not merely laying down and acquiescing to the injustice of surveillance imposed upon them, but are meeting it with a range of responses that must be understood as everyday forms of resistance.

Theoretical framework for understanding youth resistance to surveillance

Resistance has often been framed in education literature as collective, or individual in nature. Scholars frequently unpack collective participation in terms of a common struggle to be heard. Here, the intention is to address a set of conditions or constraints. At other times, resistance is framed as individualistic and oppositional participation. In this case, an agent reacts to a given situation without the intention of changing conditions (Langhout, 125). However, recent interdisciplinary scholarship has splintered this binary. From sociology to cultural studies, the term resistance has been to “describe a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life” (534, Hollander and Einwohner).

In their review of resistance literature, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) found that the interdisciplinary concept of resistance now includes *recognition* (by an audience) and *intent* (by actor). But what does recognition mean in the context of resistance? For Hollander and Einwohner, recognition implies that an oppositional act be “readily apparent to others” (539). In other words, resistance must be *visible*. This would include large protest movements and revolutions, anything that confronts their targets directly

and openly. But it is important to note that resistance need not be visible to the powerful—or vertically oriented—in order to fulfill the definition of the term. Visibility can be ‘horizontal’ as well—producing relationships of resistance amongst the weak, for the solidarity of the weak. As James C. Scott writes, such everyday acts of resistance, for Scott, “make no headlines”(302, 185). On his view, such acts must be understood in the framework of resistance because they “mitigate claims made by appropriating classes” (302). Scott contends that those in subordinate positions rarely have resources to openly resist those in power; what may appear to be conformity, in other words, cannot be mistaken as compliance.⁷⁷ In a similar vein, the sociologist Michel De Certeau remarks that “the immigrant worker does not have the same critical or creative elbow-room as the average citizen” (xvii). For both thinkers, recognition and visibility does not depend on conspicuousness before authority, but may indeed need to remain concealed, or may only be visible to a small cohort of peers or allies.

Such modes of concealment are one of primary subjects of this chapter.

Let us now consider the shifting nature of *intent* as it relates to resistance scholarship. Hollander and Einwohner claim that many scholars assume that when an “actor intends to resist, then her/his actions qualify as resistance” (542; 2004). Others assume that “actors may be unable to fully articulate their motivations, especially to the interviewer or researcher” (542). A final group contends that an “actor’s intentions are not central to understanding something as resistance” (543). For instance, studies of style and dress, such as those of Hebdige (1979) and Fiske (1989), rarely consider the intent

⁷⁷ This is important in light of our acclimation to surveillance.

behind such acts. The position does always imply that intent is irrelevant or wholly inaccessible to analysis. Scott (1985) argues that it is sometimes possible to analyze actions in order to infer intent (290-301). In performing this work, we might sidestep the significant epistemological problems endemic to any analysis of intentions.

One of the enduring problems of establishing whether acts of resistance contain elements of recognition and intent is the messiness of interpretation: simply put, “different researchers can understand the same behavior differently” (2004, 543). In an effort to clarify the analytical utility to be found within the concept of resistance, Hollander and Einwohner offer a useful, though incomplete, typology of resistance. Their typology includes seven types: overt, covert, unwitting, target-defined, externally-defined, missed, and attempted.

Though I will draw upon these types to help categorize and organize the forms of youth behavior uncovered in my research, I argue that a final provision must be added. Many acts of resistance can be seen as striving for recognition. The tacit aim of achieving this recognition can be derived from a careful analysis of the resistant act. This, for me, is a central gap in so many typologies of resistance: an act of resistance may be visible or invisible to authority, visible or invisible within their subordinate communities of dissent. Acts of resistance can be future-oriented and strive for recognition in a language that has yet to fully articulate itself to the outside world. They may be understood in a framework of incipience, or emergence. David Brotherton (2007) gives particular weight to this type of agency in his studies of gang resistance. He argues that “such resistance begins with small gestures of contestation to existing power relations...

Over time these gestures, however discrete, eventually evolve into a set of actions that are transformative both in terms of the self and in terms of the life worlds of the actions” (6).

Observing resistance in the context of pervasive surveillance

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott (1990) analyzes seeming patterns of compliance and submission that emerge when surveillance is overt. For Scott, resistance originates “not simply from material appropriation but from the pattern of personal humiliations that characterize that exploitation” (p. 112). Resistance in response to surveillance is complicated because the condition of surveillance often compromises what one’s efforts can accomplish, how they are recognized, and the intent behind them. The notion of ‘*eyes on me regardless*’ helps to illuminate this complexity.

The statement comes from the way that Jason, a 17-year old student at Urban Word NYC who grew up in Brooklyn, describes the meaning of surveillance. He reports: “I mean people could watch me but I don’t really care what they think. Their eyes are on me regardless. They takin’ time to look at me, right?” (32, interview). From the minute I first heard it, I began to mark how pervasive the feeling of being watched -- in stores, on street corners, in subways, and now in schools -- is among the urban teens I interviewed and with whom I spent time.

As my interviews began to accumulate, I began to hear echoes of his sentiment. For instance, Elizabeth Acevedo , another student at Urban Word NYC who grew up in Washington Heights, told me:

I don’t know if you really can resist being watched. I mean I think you try not to notice you’re being watched and you’re still noticing because you’re trying not to. I think I’m still trying to figure out how to resist that. I have the problem all the time with guys on the train. And just that level

of discomfort, that awareness of knowing that there is someone constantly looking at me and trying to get my attention and just looking at something else, but it's still acknowledging that I have to look at something else because I don't feel comfortable looking at you" (15, interview).

Elizabeth Perez from Baldwin High School, put it like this: "I think it's something universal – to be watched. If you are watched, there's no type of human interaction. I think you can't stop it. There's no means to not be watched unless you don't leave your house, I guess. But even then, you're still going to be watched" (7, Interview). Tyrone, from Urban Word NYC who grew up in Brooklyn, tells me, "Um, you can't resist being watched, it's like impossible cuz somebody's gonna watch you regardless" (35, Interview). And finally, Rafael, another Baldwin student, reveals that "I don't think you can stop being watched. They're going to watch you. They're going to find a way to look at you" (10, interview).

This chapter intends to reveal the countless and creative ways that these youth respond to instances of injustice in their daily lives. Acts of youth resistance are not often distinctly oppositional, but are instead deflective, mercurial, spontaneous, and tactical. In this sense, they are harder to observe and interpret *as* resistance and are often compromised by the fact that they are watched regardless. While their acts of resistance may not easily fit with the definitions of resistance described above, what we find when studying patterns of youth resistance to surveillance is that, *firstly*, students understand the consequences of getting caught in the 'net' of surveillance; *secondly*, there are risks in directly opposing authority; *thirdly*, while many do what they can to avoid being watched – "somebody's gonna watch you regardless"; and *fourthly*, many students are seeking

ways of deflecting the punitive glare of surveillance by participating in it -- as Jason's statement, "they takin' the time to look at me, right?" openly acknowledges.

Forms of Student Resistance

Following Scott, this chapter seeks to uncover everyday and seemingly informal formations of resistance – these are the kind that “make no headlines.” Scott's complex notion of everyday resistance offers a vital tool for analyzing the actually existing conditions of youth agency. For Scott, audience recognition (whether from the perspective of authority or contestation) has little to do with whether a particular act of defiance is resistant. This counterintuitive claim can be unpacked through his notion of “the public transcript.” For Scott, the public transcript is a collection of sanctioned roles, practices and behaviors. If following appropriately, acting out the public transcript produces the outward impression of conformity. By way of contrast, the “hidden transcript” is “the privileged site for subversive discourse” (27). Behavior within this discourse takes place under the nose of those in power. The hidden transcript, for Scott, is often represented through sheltered discourse such as gesture, speech, and practices (27). He argues that the practice of domination *creates* the hidden transcript.

This chapter, and the one that follows, are focused on unearthing the hidden transcripts that surveillance creates within Baldwin high school, and particularly amongst its youth of color. In this chapter, I outline three forms of student resistance: broadly defined as protest, tactical avoidance, and appropriation. In chapter five, I will focus largely on writing and the space of an after-school poetry club as a form of incipient resistance. In both chapters, I will include data from interviews, field notes, and

observations of and with close to twenty urban teenagers who live and attend school in New York City. Many are students at Baldwin High School. Others attend other high schools throughout the city and are members of Urban Word NYC.⁷⁸

At this juncture, I want to turn to the students' initial and most visibly oppositional response to the installation of metal detectors at Baldwin High School--the walkout. This public protest falls directly within the traditional conceptual framework of resistance scholarship. In the course of my research, I spoke with several of the students who left school and marched three miles under police escort in order to hold a meeting with their region's superintendent. I also spoke with students who decided to remain inside the building for fear of punishment by their parents and teachers.

Resistance as Protest: Whispers

Although some whispers of impending metal detectors had circulated the previous spring, little if any formal warning was given to Baldwin students until they were gathered in an auditorium at the beginning of the new school year. Crammed into the auditorium at the beginning of the 2005 school year, roughly 5,000 students were told that by mid-September they would be entering school through metal detectors. A letter was sent home which listed what 'privileges' would be lost based on this new policy and told students to prepare to arrive at campus early – with enough time to clear the scanners and make it to 1st period before the 2nd bell. Lateness would not be excused. Students were to leave their MP3 devices, cell phones, and other contraband items, such as

⁷⁸ As noted, the Appendix contains background information on each student named in this chapter and a more detailed explanation of my methodology which went towards uncovering the data included herein.

weapons, at home and that any of these items would be confiscated upon entrance. They were to show up in time for first period while allowing at least ten to fifteen minutes for delays at the metal detectors. They were to remove belts, jewelry, and boots before walking through the scanners. Were they to neglect to do this, they would be wanded by a hand-held scanner. Were something still to go off, they could be asked to remove everything. Students would also be seeing more security guards and NYPD around campus. They were to observe these figures as school authority. Finally, students would lose their open campus lunch privileges in favor of a new policy unfortunately titled, “captive lunch.” Mr. Greer notes that failure of the administration to impose the lunch policy respectfully:

Just incredible. Like on so many levels that you couldn't figure out how insensitive and unbelievably racist that is. It was just sort of dumbfounding. They didn't explain it to the students and they put it down in a way it was really insulting. And then of course the manner in which it's done at the gates, as it were, is really rude (3, Interview).⁷⁹

Jessica Sosa, a senior at Baldwin and a member of Sistas and Brothas United⁸⁰ (SBU), recounts her memory of the confusion among students in those first weeks of school:

It was we go in the school where we don't have a learning center anymore so don't even think about doing your homework. They tore down a couple of the classrooms, made our lunchroom bigger just so we could all sit there... And then they give us a letter notice talking about 'oh, start getting used to not bringing your cell phones to school, start practicing not bringing a lot of metal to school.... After that grace period is when we

⁷⁹ Mr. Greer goes on to note that his “students wrote about it and did wonderful exposes of the way that they were treated, herded into the school” (3, Interview). The writing by students will be addressed in detail in chapter five.

⁸⁰ Sistas and Brothas United is a grassroots, community-based organization that works closely with high schools in the surrounding areas. The high school in question is one of its projects. It is also the Bronx affiliate of Urban Youth Collective, a downtown-based program designed to help urban youth organize and resist unfair school policies. Though SBU was not responsible for initiating the walkout, it was on-site to insure that students were not harassed by the police. SBU also supported student organizers of the walkout in an advisory capacity.

had the metal detector[s] and that is when the protest happened (12, Interview).

The Walkout

Esteban, a junior and also a member of SBU, remembered being “in the auditorium when they were talking about the metal detectors and yeah, there was a few kids [who] were upset because you couldn’t bring cell phones cuz new rules ... you couldn’t wear jewelry, couldn’t go out to lunch and I was in the auditorium and kids were talking ‘we’re gonna walk out, we’re gonna walk out ... cuz they were upset and frustrated” (1, Interview). After little warning and virtually no time to organize, a group of students began circulating a petition in the lunchroom protesting the metal detectors and cops. Sconex.com, an unofficial website for high school students, also became a space where students began posting about a possible walkout. Rafael Paredes recounts:

I actually saw a posting on Sconex about a walkout. Students wanted to protest about the metal detectors being put in and the slow down ... so I saw a posting on it and I was just like: it won’t work. That’s what I really thought. But then the day came and then I saw about 5 people standing aside the line. The line was so long ... I knew I wasn’t going to wait in line. I’m too much of a rebel to do that so I just went aside and started talking to the people who were trying to start the protest (7-8, Interview).

On September 21, the first day in which students were to pass through metal detectors, roughly 30 student organizers rallied close to 1,500 of their peers to walk out of school in between first, second, third, and fourth periods.⁸¹ Because the decision to install metal detectors had not been explained to staff or students, and because, according to

⁸¹ Jessica Sosa, one of the chief organizers and a member of SBU, told me that 4 adult staff from SBU came on the day of the walkout to help students think about their strategies since little had been planned. Jessica told me that the protest was spontaneous and not organized. However, there were about 7 students making posters (on the morning of); 4 students dealing with media; and 15-20 students trying to generate excitement and momentum by rallying students already in classes to walk out of school. They did this by pasting a page from the student handbook to classroom doors. It states that **students have a right to protest** conditions that they deem unfair. This convinced many students to leave.

Mr. Greer, “there was no rationale behind the plan,” the plan-from-above represented disciplinary power at its most one-directional: emanating from top to bottom.

By most accounts by staff and students, the surveillance strategy at the high school also appeared hasty, ad hoc, and ill-planned from the start, and exposed holes in the Department of Education’s security policies. Under police escort, students walked to the Superintendent’s office at Fordham Plaza in the Bronx and demanded a meeting with their region’s superintendent and other Department of Education officials demanding that “metal detectors and security cameras be removed, that they be allowed to have lunch outside the school, and that an earlier ban on cell phones be lifted” (Santos, 2005). They were granted a meeting and a small group of them met with school officials.

Reported widely on local and national news, the walkout clearly represents a breakdown in school policy and student compliance and is the place from which to begin thinking about how urban teenagers are contending with and also responding to school surveillance policy. The walkout is an exceptional example of a student-driven collective call to action that serves as a telling reminder that “youth as collective community actors” are indeed “capable of responding to coercive policies” (Ginwright et al., 32-33).

Spontaneous organizing

In terms of its size and visibility, the student-organized walkout was the only protest of its kind to happen as surveillance practices intensified in the schools of New York City. And yet, the protest was as ad hoc and spontaneous in feel as the implementation of surveillance equipment in the school itself. The walkout effectively

took the school by surprise, including its students.⁸² Fernando Carlo, an organizer from SBU, suggested that,

As an act of resistance, the walkout didn't take a lot of planning to do it. You know, they showed up to school – these scanners, these metal detectors, these cops with guns ... all this stuff they didn't have ... and you know to have a group of students who had more freedoms than some -- like they had outside lunch, they didn't have to go through metal detectors, and then all this stuff just happened. They come back to school and all of it's there. I'm pretty sure they felt uncomfortable and it made them realize they had to do something about it (1, Interview).

Although school security attempted to prevent students from leaving the building before fourth period, they were out-numbered. According to David, a junior at Baldwin, it was the “only time that [Baldwin] students were unified..... at first it was just the originators of the thing. They were just standing outside by themselves initially chanting we want freedom. Gradually more kids were coming out and, by like fourth period, it was basically the whole school just ran out and I remember that day, I was walking out too and the security was trying to stop us, but because there were so many they really couldn't, they had to let us go out” (26, interview).

Although the protest became collective, it was never fully unified. In discussions with students following the walkout, many of them spoke of the fact that a lot of kids walked out for the fun of it; that they were not really invested in getting rid of the metal detectors and were unwilling to stay with the struggle. David remarked,

I mean I knew this whole walkout thing wasn't going to do anything. The only way it was gonna be completely effective is if we continue to do it, like if it was consistent. Then they would have said 'okay, they really have a problem with it, they're not just doing it to get out of class one day' ...

⁸² Rafael told me that “it was short-notice organization. 5 students. It was originally 4 until I came up. We were standing on the side for 30 minutes. We only had 11 to 20 or 30 students and then 2nd period we went from that to 200 students. By the end of 3rd period we have 1500, around there” (9, interview).

but because it was just one day and the next day we were just following the rules, it didn't have any effect (26, interview).

To the student organizers, the ones most likely to do the work of mounting a follow-up protest, peer cynicism undermined momentum. Their perceptions of their fellow peers' motives (or lack of them) influenced their decision not to continue the struggle to overturn the surveillance and security measures in their school. Jessica expressed her frustration at the attitudes of her fellow peers:

My brother went to Kennedy and he would be like 'ha, ha, you're going through it too' instead of saying 'I know what you feel', and it's like you know, we should fight it together. Instead of that, it's like ... 'just get used to it' That really gets me mad. Instead of getting used to it, let's not have it happen at all and prevent it from ever happening again.... I hate this weak kind of thinking (16, interview).

Within months, students reported having gotten used to things and having grown accustomed to waiting in line to get to class. "Things have gotten smoother but not because of security -- security is just as bad. It's gotten better because of the students. We're less aggravated because we know what's gonna happen," Lolo told me (3, interview).

Creating Awareness

Although frustration and anger fueled the walkout, its lack of organization may have hurt its chances of creating sustained change at the school. Teacher Kevin Greer confirmed that "there was this impetus, there was this fleeting feeling of rebellion and empowerment. And I don't know enough about the story to really comment on it, but from a certain distance or a certain closeness, they got siphoned off. It amounted to about nothing." According to Mr. Greer, students "just didn't know what to do with their

anger.... It just like dissipated as if like this fume” (5-6, Interview). Although the DOE agreed to meet with students, these meetings neither removed the metal detectors, nor the school’s heightened security presence. Fellow teacher Ray Pultinas reported that although the protest surprised and delighted him, it “didn’t achieve a lot, as far as I know. It really seemed like the meetings [between administrators and students] that took place after, there was no real compromise. There was no real negotiations as far as I can see” (5-6, interview).

But students like Esteban insisted that the walkout’s greatest achievement was that it “did create awareness” (2, interview). He went on, “yeah, it didn’t remove the metal detectors, but I think it got teachers and the people who run the school to understand that the kids were upset with the fact that they were putting in metal detectors and some of them don’t really feel safe with metal detectors” (2, Interview). Though they were disappointed that the protest didn’t achieve its aim and that it was not followed up by another protest⁸³, student upon student agreed that the walkout “showed to a lot of officials that youth do have a voice” (7-8, Rafael interview). For Rhina, “it inspired many other protestors. Like, I do believe this, even though it’s a high school thing, that’s a real big deal to have the news media come. It wasn’t just channel 12 ... it was channel 11, Fox 5. The President was on that news. That’s part of [Baldwin’s] history now. It inspired more kids to speak up” (1, Interview).

Importantly, the walkout reminded both students and teachers that students had the right to peacefully assemble “against things that we dislike, so we took that into

⁸³ Many students expressed disappointment at what the walkout failed to achieve: “it could have been so much more and then it wasn’t. I know a lot of them feel like they didn’t really achieve anything. We still have metal detectors or we still have cops harassing us or embarrassing us in the morning (8-9, Jessica Interview).”

consideration,” Rafael said. On the morning of the walkout, several student organizers like Jessica stood outside of classrooms and showed their peers the page in the student handbook that states “you have the right to protest.... we had to underline it and circle it really, really big and make so many arrows and we just had a whole bunch of books like that” (6, interview)⁸⁴. She reported that “just showing people, like ‘look, it says it right here, you can do whatever you want, they cannot stop you, they can’t arrest you” helped students decide to leave the building. “Even some cool deans ... said ‘we can’t touch you, we can’t hurt you, we can’t do anything.’ If you want this to be big and happen, they were even telling students, then leave” (8, interview).

When I broached the topic of what the walkout had achieved in a focus group of roughly ten Baldwin students, these themes were echoed in different ways by everyone. David told me that “It was effective, but not effective enough, because I think that if more kids ... were serious about the walkout and about the reasons and not just wanting to cut school then it would have been a very effective walkout.” Rafael believed that “it showed that we aren’t afraid to fight for what we want. Because our society sees [that we’re] suppose[d] to succumb to everything that they throw at us. I feel that the walkout encouraged or showed a lot of people what teenagers are really capable of.” And, finally, Anthony (“Dred”), an active student who participated in organizing the protest, stated that

it brought about an issue to the media that wasn’t thought about before, why these urban schools are getting metal detectors. These were never

⁸⁴ Jessica, a member of SBU, went on to say that one of the most important aspects of SBU is that it “teaches you that no matter how old you are you still have rights. Like you know you should be able to speak for yourself. You shouldn’t be too modest about people cutting your leg off or you can stop people from doing that. You can’t let people just strip your rights like that just because they are an intimidating figure or whatever” (26, Interview).

brought to anyone's attention until we did the walk out. It was in the New York Times which is a national newspaper so it doesn't really get much bigger than that. So while people say it wasn't effective because it didn't directly change anything, it still opened some peoples eyes, like these kids are really suffering out there. It's not even like school no more (1, Focus Group interview).

Furthermore, Fernando Carlo believes that the protest forced adults to take youth more seriously. He explained,

Now all these people see that students understand what's going on; they understand that they [students] do feel uncomfortable—they realize the metal detectors don't help and they create all these other problems and the students know and I think the number one excuse for why students aren't involved in this kind of decision-making is because 'oh, students don't know.' Well, the students are smart enough to realize the metal detectors aren't helping; they're smart enough to get all these other students together and walk off to the region office and get a meeting, so I definitely think it [the walkout] made people jump up on their toes and realize that students know (2, interview).

The Baldwin walkout contained elements of resistance, namely opposition, intent, and recognition. It was an anomaly, and its failures are as spectacular as its successes. Organizing in response to school security and surveillance policy made little, if any, headway. The reasons for this are many and varied, but one of the most obvious may be the lack of infrastructure at the grassroots level. Organized, collective movements tend to move too slowly in response to institutional power. They are often turned down for protest permits (or are not below the radar enough). Finally, they can lack the resources to organize youth consistently, efficiently, and with a sense of unified purpose for an extended campaign.

And yet, although the walkout's failure to produce results upset and stung students, the protest did evidence a desire and agency among students to respond to the

unfair changes they had encountered in their school. While the practical failures of the protest were obvious, the walkout's symbolic resonance was, I would argue, as successful as it was significant.

As my research with students progressed, lesser known and less obvious forms of resistance began to emerge.⁸⁵ Before addressing how I observed students in these less spectacular situations, I want to introduce a second, personal form of student resistance.

Resistance as Protest: Talking Back

Although NYC's Department of Education insists that the presence of school security officers makes school safer, without fail, and in part due to their proximity to all forms of police harassment and profiling in neighborhoods, on subways, in stores, and elsewhere, urban youth equate the presence of security officials with harassment.⁸⁶ New York City teenagers do not typically trust "the cops." And as far as they could tell, the police were now in their school. While they may have grown accustomed to this kind of treatment in stores or on street corners, navigating school with the same kind of self-vigilance was something students resisted from the outset. Even more, as illustrated in chapter three, the metal detectors do not necessarily make the school any safer; and, as students testify it is not hard to sneak in contraband items.

⁸⁵ Although my study was not designed as multi-sited, my research participants were often conflating their experiences with surveillance in schools and those in stores, on street corners, and on the subway. In certain instances, accompanied students on trips in the marketplace, on the subway, and into their neighborhoods. This offered me a chance to observe the kinds of police surveillance they confront outside of school – so much of which was being discussed in the interviews. For this reason, I have included data that represents both types of experiences. My main point in doing so is to show the way in which students are experiencing school in similar ways to how they already experience the racism and racial profiling of the public arena.

⁸⁶ There are several layers of security—New York Police Officers (NYPD), School Safety Agents (SSA), Security Guards, Deans/hallway monitors. The SSA are those who monitor the metal detectors/scanners and the ones students come most in contact with (other than the Deans). They are the lowest ranked officers of the NYPD. They are, in one student's words, "the Riker's-hired officers—they're crazy—they think that we're the criminals. And that's how we're treated."

In addition to the walkout, students engaged in a kind of hand-to-hand, personal resistance to authority. I call this ‘talking back’, and its prevalence as a tactic was in evidence throughout my conversations with students. Christine F., a senior at a large Bronx high school that has deployed metal detectors, security, and cameras in place since 2002, reported constant harassment by security guards and school aids in the hallways of her school. Her decision to talk directly to them offers an example of oppositional resistance that evidences a personal entitlement to hold her ground: “I will be like ‘hold on a second, I’m talking to him for two minutes, and then I’m going to go to class. And then after we’re done greeting each other we will go our separate ways’” (26, interview). Christine indicated that one of her tactics for dealing with security harassment was speaking directly to security. When I asked her how she came up with this approach, she confirmed that it was the only way she could get them to stop bothering her.

They'll try to get at me, like they'll try to scream on me about something, about why I'm not in class or something. And then I'll just ... tell them, look, you better watch it because, first of all, I don't have class or I'm doing something for a teacher So like don't just assume ... that I'm doing something that I'm not supposed to be doing. And then I'll just like try to switch it like ‘well, maybe you need to ask me like what's going on and I'll respond to you. You know I'll give you a good reason why I'm doing what I'm doing’ (26, Interview).

One commonality in ‘talking back’ is the demand that the student be addressed by security with respect. Too often, however, security turns the personal nature of these interactions back on the student herself. Elizabeth P. remembered “one time after the English regents, one of the SSA was telling us to go home and we were just waiting for our friends. He said, ‘oh you probably all failed anyways’” (6, Interview). Unable to keep her anger to herself, she spoke back and told him: ‘how dare you say that. You probably

got your GED and you're stuck here' ... I went crazy and then the rest of my friends went crazy. We all just started talking shit to him" (6, Interview). Once this personal interaction is established, Elizabeth's response shifted to an analysis of why security does what they do to students. She reasoned, "they do stuff without thinking, they say stuff without thinking ... and when they see someone like me who knows what she's talking about, who knows what they're doing ... they push back.... and I don't blame them personally because, like I said, it's a vicious cycle, but have some common sense. Don't question me when you don't know why you're questioning me" (6, Interview).

Students such as Christine and Elizabeth often describe themselves as having 'attitude' – a quality that may help explain their need to 'talk back' to authority. But many middle-range students are concerned with graduating high school, possibly heading to college, and staying out of jail. For this reason, they must also exhibit reserve. For Christine, reaching her senior year felt like a miracle. Out of the tight knit crew of twenty friends she started high school with three years ago, Christine was the only one to graduate. In the following example, Elizabeth's reserve can be seen:

I was walking into school through scanning and I was with my attitude [because] they treat us like crap and I'm not gonna take that – and one of the ladies, she hit my head. And I said 'don't touch me' and she realized she fucked up and she said, 'okay, I'm sorry.' My mother doesn't hit me so for a staff to hit me, I was ready to knock her out. and I was like 'hold back, Elizabeth, cuz she could take you to jail' (5, Interview).

Students reported several examples of talking back outside of schools – in stores or the neighborhoods in which they live. Although my study was not designed to be multi-sited, my research participants often conflated their experiences with surveillance in schools and those in stores, on street corners, and on the subway. Multi-sited research

allows the researcher to link the micro-level (everyday interactions), the mezzo-level (institutional policies and practices), and the macro-level (structural forces and dominant cultural themes) (Marcus, 1998). Although I was particularly interested in their school experiences, my interviewees invited me to follow them beyond the walls of school. In certain instances, I accompanied students on trips in the marketplace, on the subway, and into their neighborhoods. This experience offered me a chance—however individualistic and limited it may have been—to observe the myriad of police surveillance these students confront outside of school. In one example, Rhina is much more inclined to speak up in school, but less so in her neighborhood of Co-op City, Bronx. She said:

when I'm walking down the hallway, I'll be like 'what are you looking at'. I told you about the security guard who was following us. Like I speak up in school. Not in the neighborhood. I feel like they're more official. We used to have security-type police in the hood. Now we have NYPD. No one is outside. They don't even loiter.... NYPD is really there now (10, Interview).

Whereas Jason's version of talking back is choosing not to say anything. He reported:

a cop came up to me a couple of times just for the fact that I look suspicious, he doesn't even ask me anything. The main line is: 'what are you doing out here? what are you doing?' I don't have to say anything so I just keep quiet until he's gotta get all forceful with it: 'I'm saying what are you doing?' and I have to state 'well, I'm going home'. Period. I don't have to talk to them. (Interview, 33).

Another method of talking back is used by Jodi-Ann, a member of Urban Word NYC from the Bronx, when shopping for clothes. She told me: “they just like stay on me, and I'm like, but there's people over there and you're not watching them and they might be doing what you think I'm doing.” In response, Jodi-Ann approaches security and “speaks to them and I'll be like ‘oh, I want this and that. Can you show me this in that

style?’ I just go up to them and ask for their help so that that way they can [put] more focus on helping me out in the store” (Jodi, 2).

When Emmanuel senses that he is being watched or profiled in a store, his way of resisting is very different from Jodi-Ann’s. His is an example of ‘talking back’ that involves physical resistance after being poorly treated by store employees: “I wasn’t going to buy anything anyways ... but I went back to the store with my godmother cuz I told my godmother and um she was like looking around and they were real attentive to her cuz she was like dressed nice and then I walked in and I’m like ‘don’t buy anything cuz they’re racist’ and she’s like ‘okay’ and walked out. And the guy was like mad and whatever ... when you make them lose dollars, it pisses them off” (13, Interview).

Still other students describe instances of implicit ‘talking back’. These examples frequently occur at the metal detectors. These acts of resistance are non-verbal and symbolic. For instance, Elizabeth A., a student at a smaller, specialized high school in mid-town Manhattan, reported that students sabotage the metal detectors by running wet umbrellas through the machines. Even more common are techniques deployed for “sneak[ing] in their cell phones ... I know Sidekick’s look like calculators in the metal detectors, so people just have Sidekick’s and just put it in their book bag, or they will tape their cell phone to their calculator and sneak it in”. She reminded me: “it’s so stupid because we have metal detectors on Monday through Friday, but ... if I really wanted to, I could bring a knife, I could bring whatever I wanted to, on Saturday and just pick it up on Monday, if I wanted to do something bad to somebody” (20, Interview). Finally, Lloyd described the difficulty he has had tolerating the fact that every student must take

off his/her boots and put them through the scanner in order to clear the metal detectors and get to class. Every student wearing boots is asked to remove them, but Lloyd refused to remove his. Lloyd insisted that although his refusal meant several trips to the principal's office, it was worth it "because you know, I believe if I have something on my mind, I'm gonna speak it" (5-6, Interview).

Scott argues that "the greater the power exercised over [subordinate populations] and the closer the surveillance, the more incentive subordinates have to foster the impression of compliance, agreement, and deference" (p. 89). Nevertheless, this chapter has suggested that Baldwin's student population behaved in a variety of ways, some of which appears to contradict his claims. I have examined the significance of both the collectively assembled walkout and a spectrum of personal acts of resistance as 'talking back'. These two markedly different types of opposition undoubtedly function as responses to a landscape of increasing surveillance in urban schools. And yet, Scott's "incentives" for 'appearing compliant' begin to look more reasonable once we consider the nature of a third set of student tactics.

Combinatory Experience: multiple jeopardy in the lives of students

Students widely reported a tangible anxiety as a result of the constant gaze of suspicion. This was one of the most common reasons students cited for resisting the installation of metal detectors and security in their school. Across interviews and focus groups, the students I spoke with frequently associated security inside the school building with interactions with law enforcement on subways, in malls, and on their blocks. The conflation is significant, for it underscores the failure of urban schools to differentiate

themselves from the culture of the streets and surrounding neighborhoods.⁸⁷ Suspicion, in other words, may be experienced as a total, claustrophobic condition that follows urban youth throughout their public life. Little research has been done to mark the cumulative effect of this dynamic in the phenomenal lives of youth. For this reason, I have included data that represents both types of experiences. My main point in doing so is to suggest that the cumulative result of the failure of schools to differentiate themselves from the surveilled public sphere may be far more oppressive than it may at first appear. Scholars cannot pretend that life in school is bracketed off in the experience of a student's everyday life. This is a potentially fatal mistake, for in assuming that institutional and private experiences of surveillance do not have some combinatory component, we risk being blinded to the way student resistance might be perfected, imported, and radicalized in a feedback loop generated by the continuity of both spheres.

Even further, surveillance *within* the school is also more complex than we might think. Not only does the gaze of authority fall on students, but the gaze of peers also functions as a mode of enforcement, potentially adding to the cumulative effect of claustrophobia in the lived experience of the student. A ripple effect can be noted, in which one student's humiliation at the hands of security can bleed into a simultaneous humiliation—whether real or perceived—at the hands of her peers. In effect, students are experiencing 'multiple jeopardy'.

⁸⁷ Their perceptions that heightened surveillance breeds excessive suspicion on the part of authority echo the sentiments of over 900 youth surveyed in Michelle Fine et al's participatory action research with youth entitled, "'Anything Can Happen with Police Around': Urban Youth Evaluate Strategies of Surveillance in Public Places" (Fine, Freudenberg, Payne, Perkins, Smith, and Wanzer, 2003).

Months after the walkout, in the course of my interviews, the rage students expressed as participants in the walkout had for some slipped quietly into acquiescence. Junior students lamented the fact that they had such high hopes for their senior year; now all they cared about was “getting out of here.” Senior students stated that they acquiesced to the harassment of security guards for fear that any reprisal would jeopardize their graduating on time. And yet, students continued to report stories of security officials humiliating students—disturbing tales of female students forced to leave school because their bra wires set off the metal detector; experiences of being scanned for up to five minutes while security guards gossiped with each other while the student was made late to first period; being apprehended for going to the bathroom without a bathroom pass while the student ahead of them, committing the same infraction, was let go because he was a “buddy” of the security guard.

Upon recalling an incident that had happened many months earlier, soon after the metal detectors were installed, Jessica’s eyes started to well up. Her voice cracked as she recounted a time when she forgot to remove her belt before entering school:

I was embarrassed one time. That really got me mad. I forgot to take off my belt, I was more worried about being late for this class or my mind is somewhere else ... And I beeped or whatever, and this cop is like ‘oh, hey, everybody, look at this stupid kid, you know, dumb enough to have her belt on. Everyone laugh at her’ kinda thing. You know, he just totally screwed up my day. I even started crying. I was so embarrassed ... So it was kind of like trying to make everyone feel like crap so you won’t even dare talk back (17-18, Interview).

These stories form the institutional backdrop upon which students actively respond to the surveillance they face daily; they also highlight the complex nature of responding to what amounts to a double surveillance within the school itself. As Jessica’s testimony makes

clear, harassment by security guards in front of one's peers reveals the power of school-based surveillance. It is not a one-to-one relationship; the disciplining effect emanates from multiple sources. It is pervasive "like stalking, almost", as Rafael put it. In this example, security accomplishes two things at once: it enforces the schools rules (safety), and embarrasses students to the point of silence in front of their peers (control). In many ways this incident captures the essence of the double-bind at work for students who are determined to graduate high school and willing to compromise or "conform" to the humiliating conditions they face in order to do so.

Over the course of my research, I uncovered a range of less obvious forms of resistance undertaken by students in response to the combinatory experience of surveillance, whether at the hands of the school, the community, or amongst peers. I place all forms of tactical resistance under the broad category of 'tactical avoidance'. I argue that tactical avoidance can provide forms of resistance that involves a range of subtle attempts at *evading* the effects of combinatory surveillance without eschewing the institution and its communities altogether.

Resistance as tactical avoidance

De Certeau's seminal work *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) set forth a method for framing daily, everyday culture as a practice of resistance. He argued that the practices of those in subordinate positions are often assumed to be passive or docile, and therefore overlooked as merely consumptive, rather than also productive. He investigated a range of practices, from reading and talking, to walking and dwelling, in an attempt to uncover their subversive logic. De Certeau's work can therefore be seen as re-routing the

emphasis of sociological study from the organized and spectacular onto the ‘everyday’, mundane, and quotidian. His work, similar to that of the feminist ethnographers and cultural anthropologists, insists that the everyday survival strategies of those in subordinate positions can be reconstituted as sometimes transgressive, often artistic, and always “anything but passive” (xxii).

Although indebted to Foucault and Bourdieu, De Certeau generally takes issue with these theorists for ignoring or under-valuing the strategies taken up by individuals. For instance, he claims that Bourdieu wrongly emphasizes the “problematic of the place” over the “problematic of practices” (55). In response to Foucault, he argues that “if it is true that the grid of ‘discipline’ is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it” (xiv). In this sense, everyday practices are those that are not reducible to the ‘grid of discipline’ that Foucault unearths. For De Certeau, anything that stands outside the grid of discipline (i.e. the daily practices of walking, cooking, gossiping, dressing for example) might be understood as subtle forms of rebellion.

At the same time, however, De Certeau’s work does not naively equate tactical resistance with a *politics*. His work aims to develop ways of observing, a “method that values the singularity of close attention to the specific, located object” (7, Highmore). He attempts to “speculatively map the formal logics of ordinary and daily production” (106, Highmore). One can find in his work an attempt to transform a seemingly dispersed and illogical lived world into systematic (if not surprising and idiosyncratically drawn) tapestries, containing rhythms, patterns, and textures. His method of observing everyday

practices in conjunction with an insistence in exposing their cultural logic makes De Certeau's theories particularly useful in theorizing resistance.

Forms of tactical avoidance: Don't go in

I found in De Certeau a tactic mandate for observing and analyzing how students were resisting the multiple jeopardy of surveillance inside and outside their school.⁸⁸ I call this resistance 'tactical avoidance'.⁸⁹ A tactic, De Certeau reminds us, "insinuates itself into the other's place without taking it over" and is "always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized" (xix). Students choose these tactics in order to avoid trouble with authority. Given that there may be no way of *escaping* surveillance, tactical avoidance would imply an ability to cope with difficult conditions from multiple sources of power. An example of what I mean by tactical avoidance is expressed succinctly by David when he talked about how he approaches a store, "if they're looking suspicious at me, I just avoid it altogether. I just don't go in." Christine expressed a similar compromise :

I try to avoid having confrontations with the school aid. Before it was like I wanted to say something, I needed to say something, it was part of my life that I had to say something because I felt I was getting disrespected, but I can't fight it no more because I'm only one person. I know people are going to back me up on what, you know, about how I feel, but it's like I don't even want to fight it you know. I just want to leave, like just get out because it's getting on my nerves (32, Interview).

⁸⁸ They also led me to see the significance of **space** ('space is practiced place', 117), **writing** (the blank page is a place of production for the subject, 135) and **reading** (reading as poaching: 'the reader insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation', xxi) – much of which will be addressed in Chapter six -- in tracing forms of student resistance to surveillance.

⁸⁹ One question that falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, but is relevant to the future state of education is that if urban students are learning to navigate the entrances and hallways of their schools through tactical avoidance and evasion due to the fear of being caught, what does this tell us about how they are navigating their classrooms?

Yet another feeling of just wanting to ‘get out’ is expressed by Tyrone in his story recounting being watched by the proprietor of a corner store he goes almost everyday that is near his home in Bushwick, Brooklyn:

I was in a corner store, and I was trying to find some pancake mix. And like one of the guys that worked there kept watching me, cuz like, he thought I stole brownies like two years ago or some shit, like, I’m like ‘Yo, why would I steal brownies? I’ve got money, it costs 25 cents, I don’t got to steal brownies.’ So I’m just watching and trying to find some pancake mix and I look over and I’m like “What?” and he’s like ‘No, no, no...’ And, I’m like, fuck this, so I just left. I went to a grocery store, I didn’t even feel like dealing with them (7-8, Interview).

Unlike Jodi-Ann or Emmanuel, whose bad experiences in stores were featured as instances of talking back, Tyrone chooses not to ‘talk back’, but leaves the store altogether. Perhaps his ability to respond verbally is mitigated by the fact of being a black male. He told me, “So like, I feel like ... I should’ve said something but like ... my inner voice was like going crazy, just wouldn’t shut up. ... I was just standing there like ‘Yo, I’m a black man, and you’re just gonna assume I’m gonna steal something cuz I’m a black man? Yo fuck this, I’m tired of this shit.’ But yeah, my mouth was just closed” (13, Interview).

Tyrone’s unfortunate experience is one expressed often, particularly by the boys in my study. When referring to an experience in a popular video chain store, David, another African-American youth, told me: “I mean, I hate that feeling. It’s totally disrespectful, like come on ‘I know you’re watching me, what do you think, I’m stupid?’ I just walk out, I don’t buy anything ... I hate that feeling. So when that happens I just gotta go” (22, interview). Note David’s need to leave the situation entirely. When I

pressed him on whether he ever speaks up, he told me that “sometimes I do, sometimes I just walk out. It depends on my mood” (22, Interview).

For David, it appears, this is a matter of survival. He reported stories of being in a jewelry store to buy his mother something for Christmas and asked to show his money before being shown a piece of jewelry, or in taxi cabs and told to pay up front in order to arrive at his destination. His way of coping: “basically, just don’t go in. If they’re looking suspicious at me, just avoid it altogether. Just don’t go in” (23, interview). One similar example of tactical avoidance was reported by Jason, a 16-year old Grenadian-Columbian youth who lives in Coney Island. He told me: “sometimes, I just try to avoid it. There be certain stores I just don’t wanna go in because I know the guy doesn’t like me, you know. I mean even though his prices are cheaper and I wanna go in there, he’ll be really hawkin’ me and making me feel uncomfortable, like really, really on top of me.” (36-37).

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, De Certeau argues that the practices of those in subordinate positions are often considered passive or docile, and therefore overlooked as displays of tactical resistance. He reminds us that a tactic is “action characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element of a society is concealed”(xix). Their practices come to represent the “dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals” already caught in what Foucault would call the grid of discipline. De Certeau’s attentiveness to the ways of operating which are ‘hidden in plain view’ and his notion of ‘tactics’ helps us see the different shapes and nuances that forms of student resistance can take. His thinking offers an opportunity to assess the following discussion that took place in a focus group of thirteen students who participated in my research after

school. This conversation seemed to reveal students' desire to avoid interactions with authority.

Jen: *So a lot of you can identify an undercover cop, but that doesn't really get you out of being pulled over...*

Rafael: *You know when to avoid it though. Because if there's an undercover cop there, you're not going to do something.*

Lloyd: *Especially if you know the areas they walk around, be like, 'Oh I don't want to go down there cuz I don't feel like being harassed today'. Go around, take the longer way. Don't worry about it.*

Jen: *Does it matter that you even have to be thinking about this stuff?*

Lloyd: *If it's going to avoid harassment, it don't matter.*

Such examples of tactical avoidance emerge within the context of surveillance and scrutiny. Within this context, finding ways to avoid being watched is not easily won. It requires an ability to anticipate the consequences and respond in a way that best serves them, not the authority figure.

Avoidance evidences not only an awareness of the circumstances, but also student knowledge of how to manipulate events to their advantage. It also evidences resilience and creativity in dealing with such circumstances. In this vein, De Certeau writes, agents, "also show the extent to which intelligence is inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates" (xx, De Certeau). From students' testimonies, struggle is evident. And yet, at the same time, a notable pleasure is also articulated by youth who deploy these tactics. I refer to this dynamic as 'appropriation'. I will expand on this notion later in this chapter.

Forms of tactical avoidance: Proving them wrong

Instances of tactical avoidance evidence a compromise, the dark side of which is well expressed by legal scholar Patricia Williams (1992) who reflects upon "the cold

game of equality staring” and her invisibility as a Black woman: “I could force my presence, the real me contained in those eyes, upon them, but I would be smashed in the process. If I deflect, if I move out of the way, they will never know I existed” (p. 222).

But in my research, many youth reported they had little choice but to deflect the gaze.

Lloyd confided: “I know it’s gonna be like that the rest of my life. But I’m prepared for it. I’m prepared. I’m not scared for nothing. Like, I’m ready to go, I’m ready for life.”

When I pressed him on whether he was bothered by it, he replied:

Well, not no more. Cuz when you—like I said, this is similar to the metal detectors. When we used to come in in the mornings in September, October whatever, it was so aggravating and frustrating, it was ridiculous and kids was just fighting and everything. But after a while, you just get used to it. And it’s the same thing—‘I bet you five dollars this guy is gonna follow me in the store’.... it’s almost like fun, you know what I’m saying? But it bothers you inside, but it’s not that serious no more.... Especially because I’m not a bad kid. I’m not stealing. You know, for the fact that I’m doing good, for the fact that I’m doing the right thing, makes me feel better, even if they are following me. That makes me feel real good. (33-34, Interview)

Lloyd’s decision to play along with this stereotype is a sentiment expressed repeatedly by the youth with whom I worked. His decision to not respond directly was also common amongst those students whom I interviewed. When I asked David about this, he explained:

A lot of times, you can just fit their stereotype... if they’re walking around watching you and then you start arguing with them, that’ll just further let them know that they should be watching you cuz they’ll be like ‘oh he came in, he starting trouble with us’. That’ll just like prove them right. If you do intend on saying something about it, you have to be sure you go about it the right way (25, Interview).

Dean, who lives in Queens and attended Newtown High School, reinforced David's point. He stated that "the balls in your court to either set yourself aside [or] to give them what they want to see. They have a certain image of you, to live out that image so you're giving them what they want to see -- they'll love to hate you kinda thing ... whether or not you fit that image or not. Sometimes you have to put on an act" (49-50, Interview).

These responses resonate with Scott, who contends that such conformity is actually "an art form in which one can take some pride at having successfully misrepresented oneself" and is thus tactical and manipulative. Nevertheless, similar to Williams, Scott cautions that such "evasion ... is purchased at the considerable cost of contributing to the production of a public transcript that apparently ratifies the social ideology of the dominant" (p. 33).

Conformity may be "tactical and manipulative", but it can also produce what James Baldwin refers to as the "split self" – in which "in the midnight hour, the missing identity aches" (663, Alexander 2004). Although she spoke at length about the pressures of feeling like the model Latina student in her predominantly white AP classes, Elizabeth A. does not try to prove people wrong because for her "it might stop the surveillance, but it's not going to stop being a victim" (30, Interview).

Forms of tactical avoidance: Alternate routes

Students frequently report moving along alternate routes as a means for avoiding the gaze of security. David makes the most of Baldwin's six floors, endless hallways, and twenty-two exits:

I hate walking through the hallways. Like me, I walk through the hallways and I see the security I try to avoid them. I know I'm doing something

legitimate so most of the time I'm walking through the hallways I try to avoid them, I'll walk another way around, like go downstairs and up another stairwell....I get real frustrated especially when I see they let one kid go and then they stop me. I hate that. If you're going to stop us, stop all of us, not just the ones that look like they're going to vandalize the school... Instead of taking the short way, [I] take the long way just so I can avoid security guards. I do that a lot (23-24, Interview).

When I asked David if this was something he did consciously, he told me: “let’s say I’m walking with my friends and we see security. Just so we can avoid their harassment, we’ll go down stairs and up another stairwell just to avoid them. We’ll say, ‘oh security guards are there.’ And then the next thing, we’ll go downstairs. We don’t need to discuss it anymore, we know the deal” (24, Interview). These students’ ability to read a situation and find alternate routes sheds light on how they exist inside spaces of pervasive watching, without eschewing the institution of school entirely. While it is clear that David has strong distaste for security, his approach for dealing with them is consistently tactical.

Lacking power, someone in a subordinate position (whom De Certeau refers to as a ‘consumer’) “make do” with the material with which he has to work. Making use of the various elements of a particular terrain is, for De Certeau, the essence of the art of everyday practice. These quotidian artists are “unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality ... [consumers] trace ‘indeterminate trajectories’ that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move” (34). Despite the multiple constraints placed upon them, the youth in my research display an “ability to

divide” (35). The concept of alternate routes represents one of these abilities—the ability to divide space.

This tactic is informed and shuttled within and without the school’s premises. For example, Rhina reported that when she leaves school at the end of the day, instead of walking directly to the subway and bus stop across from the campus, she walks in the opposite direction, towards the neighboring high school. There she finds safe harbor as she waits for the bus. She remarked:

I do feel watched when I’m outside because there’s always cop cars out there. I always walk towards [Darwin High School]. I don’t like walking over there [referring to across the busy street in front of Baldwin]. There’s never any cops at [Darwin]. That’s why kids smoke over there.... They’re doing it right out of school. You don’t see kids smoking around [Baldwin]. Never a student. Over there – never have I seen a cop there (6, Interview).

By choosing alternate routes, students like Rhina are not only dodging trouble, they are also carving out new spaces in which they feel freer and more comfortable. Identifying and re-inscribing places of potential trouble offers an important coping strategy and helps to transform potentially threatening places into spaces of possibility.

Forms of tactical avoidance: Using Technology

One final example of tactical avoidance involves the use, or manipulation of, technology, and can be heard in Elizabeth A.’s statement when she told me: “I was verbally abused on 44th Street once and I try as much as possible, like when I’m walking down the street, to call someone on my cell phone... If you’re doing something it causes less attention” (30, Interview). It is not hard to understand the use of technology as a tactic to avoid being watched or harassed. Putting on one’s earphones or opening a cell

phone are simple ways that students shield themselves from aggressive stares or punitive glances.

The decision to use technology to ‘manipulate events’ can also be found in Jason’s story about using his cell phone and iPod to stay alert to everything that is going on around him. He also uses them to shield himself when walking through a dangerous section of his neighborhood:

I guess it’s whenever we feel threatened we have to turn [the iPod] off and pretend, be like secret agents.... I do that with a cell phone too.... 3 days [ago] I went to go buy some Chinese food, I know the drug dealers and the undercover cops are there so, you know me being a casual, I just flip out my phone, “you know mom, I’m gonna be home soon” saying things like that so that they know that [I’m] not involved... “Yeah, yeah, the game was good mom, I’m just getting some food.” And meanwhile the phone is not even in process, or dialing. Tactics like that. (39, Interview)

Cameras, cell phones, and iPods have been banned from schools since the implementation of metal detectors. Although it is not hard to understand why these technologies would be distracting in the classroom, their use is categorically prohibited. Their value far outstrips their ability to distract in a managed classroom.

One final example is suggestive about why cameras are not allowed in Baldwin High School. Elizabeth P. recalled: “I remember Jessica was recording the line for lunch and one of the security guards took her name down and took her camera. They were acting like, ‘oh, why are you recording this?’” When I asked her why cameras are such a big deal, Elizabeth replied: “because we’re going to record shit. We’re going to take pictures of shit and they’re afraid of that” (4, Interview).

Presumably, school authority does not want to have to deal with visual records of what is happening inside schools today. Who can blame them? According to Rafael,

“after the metal detectors, I’ll tell you from September to October, I saw at least 30 fights. When usually it was about 3-4 a month [outside the school]. It was 29 to above inside the school in 2 months. And that was just crazy.” An unfortunate, perhaps even ironic, consequence of greater school surveillance is that student technology can become the justification for greater security or the need for it to be confiscated altogether.⁹⁰ Rafael continued: “I remember one day, 10 fights happened and I was just running around with my camera trying to record everything. But then that day they said that cameras weren’t allowed in school because they said you could sneak a weapon in, somewhere in the camera you could hide a weapon” (9, Interview).

It is important to consider the ways in which smaller and more powerful audio and video technology can (and will) be used as tools of tactical resistance. Note, for example, Dean’s story about confronting a surveillance camera: “Sometimes when I see a camera, I would just smile into the camera, kinda like to show them that I know you’re watching me, I’m bold enough to show you this, you can stop watching me. I’m not gonna be dumb enough to pose for you in the camera and then go and do some certain crime... it’s kinda like, I’m defeating your purpose”⁹¹ (52-53, Interview).

⁹⁰ I address this issue in my article *Bait & Switch: A View of the Cell Phone Ban, From the Bronx (Brooklyn Rail, July/August 2006)*. “The cell phone ban is an outcome of a policy initiated in April 2006 by Bloomberg, Klein, and the Department of Education, stating that police officers with metal detectors will conduct unannounced sweeps of students and their bags at roughly 80% of middle schools and high schools throughout the city that do not have permanently installed metal detectors. The new searches quickly led to the confiscation of students’ cell phones. The furor evoked by such a policy, and played up by local and national media, was not in response to students being subjected to increased surveillance, threats to civil liberties and human dignity, or to unannounced, random searches. People are pissed about the ban on cell phones. Parent organizers rallied around the need for their children to have phones before and after school. Klein acknowledged parents’ ire; Bloomberg refused to hear their concerns, insisting that phones are used to cheat, to coordinate gang-initiated violence, or to take inappropriate photos in bathrooms (<http://brooklynrail.org/2006/07/local/bait-and-switch>).

⁹¹ The New York City group, The Surveillance Camera Players are a performance group who originated in 1996 in response to Giuliani’s installation of citywide surveillance cameras. They map where all the cameras are in the city; give walking tours which point them out; and direct guerilla-style theatre to the cameras. Their goal is to highlight the cameras to the wider public, but also to mock the insidiousness of pervasive watching (Schienke and Brown, 2003). Similar to Dean’s effort, the goal of their performance is to “call into question the asymmetrical nature of surveillance through a series of performances” (345, Mann et al).

Technology offers a form of tactical avoidance that involves the use of cell phones and iPods to ‘hide’ behind when threatened by authority, the opposite sex, or by peers. In schools, students are testing out ways to bring in confiscated items such as cameras, cell phones and iPods by befriending security or even hiding them in body cavities.⁹² I note these efforts as examples of student transgressions. However, the most striking examples of tactical avoidance are those which occur without recourse to these technologies.

Resistance as Appropriation⁹³

Unknowingly, schools are preparing students to participate in and appropriate the signs and symbols of everyday surveillance in and beyond schools. In turn, students are building a repertoire of tactical responses to these conditions. Embedded within these student responses is an astute awareness of the reality of control they experience inside their schools. This awareness, however, is also what sets the stage for and enables these same students to envision ways to exercise their freedoms in equally surprising, and potentially far-reaching ways.

In this final section, I explore two examples of resistance as appropriation. One illuminates how students create relationships with authority figures in order to resist the injustice of heavy surveillance. The other highlights the spotlight of surveillance and the efforts made by youth to perform inside that spotlight. I have chosen to use the term

⁹² Reporter Nahal Toosi goes on to report that, although New York has one of the country's toughest policies on student cell phones, students sneak their cell phones past metal detectors by slipping them down their pants, just below the waistband (where they won't get patted down); smuggling them in in pieces, with the battery separate from the main body; hiding them in food; and, when all else fails, leaving them at nearby stores that charge small holding fees (May 12, 2006, Associated Press).

⁹³ The word appropriation is used here to signal students' ability to make use of the signs and symbols of surveillance. It might be thought of as 'queering the gaze' of surveillance or hijacking or subverting the punitive spotlight. Although it is not the perfect word, I have yet to find another that works better.

‘appropriation’ to describe this form of resistance because it represents an effort on the part of students to participate with those watching them. Appropriation illustrates efforts by students to navigate the system of surveillance by actively participating with it. In most instances, forms of resistance as appropriation involve appearances and performances that are consistent with Scott’s assessment that while “appearances that power requires are, to be sure, imposed forcefully on subordinate groups . . . , they do not preclude their active use as a means of resistance and evasion” (p. 32).

One of the features of resistance as appropriation is the noticeable desire by students to be recognized by authority figures. These students initiate relationships for the sole purpose of eluding authority—they allow themselves to be seen in order to hide. In other contexts, this dual visibility and invisibility has been called ‘passing’.

I reviewed a wide range of performance theory, which deals extensively with notions of passing. Along with Butler, Munoz, and Sedgwick, I found insights from Scott and educational scholar Bryant K. Alexander exceptionally pertinent to my study.⁹⁴ Alexander (2004) believes that performance plays a role in establishing social membership in seemingly homogeneous spaces. As one of the few Black professors in his department, Alexander insists that because “the discourse of whiteness systematically forms the objects of which it speaks,” *being* and *doing* are two entirely separate acts. He argues that “acting white” within this context represents the “disconnect between the

⁹⁴ Within heavily surveilled spaces, resistant acts are also performances that must satisfy what literary theorist Judith Butler calls the “normative and compulsory” demands of those spaces. The concept of ‘passing’ in which light-skinned blacks were able to avoid white racism by performing as white is a one example of such a performance. In Butler’s rendering, passing is a central motif for understanding the strategic aims of performing in a given setting. Further, queer theorist and scholar Jose Munoz’s concept of disidentification holds that one’s subjectivity is strategic and tactical working on and against the dominant ideology. He follows literary theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s claims that identification *can mean* to identify with, while simultaneously identifying only partially, or counter-identifying. Munoz argues that disidentification is “a mode of recycling or reforming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy” (39, 1999). This concept is helpful in reminding us that while certain youth may choose to alter their behavior or participate with those who are watching them, they do so strategically.

performative act and the embodied presence.” For him, *performing* and *resisting* happen simultaneously, by grounding a hybrid identity “across borders between many communities” and conforming to “shifting performances of authenticity” (663, 2004). For some youth this is a difficult compromise: “I think it’s hard,” Elizabeth A. tells me when trying to assimilate in all-white environments, “You either try to embody what people up there look like and hope that by acting like them or like acting like the people who live there in that space will hopefully kind of make you fade in. But I don’t see that as a good alternative” (15, Interview). But for many youth, as this section will go to show, resisting by performing is the only alternative. With these ideas in mind, I will now turn to examples of appropriation culled from my data with youth.

Forms of appropriation: Establishing relationships

As they report their experience, youth are not too fond of security guards. And yet, throughout my interviews and observations, many describe brief but daily attempts to build relationships with security guards and school aids. On several occasions, when I accompanied students on walks through the hallways, or when we exited the school together after school, I witnessed these seemingly small, innocuous exchanges taking place between students and school aids and security. Although at the time, they seemed merely friendly, they can also be seen as tactical efforts to win approval or favor from those monitoring them. For instance, Christine claimed that “the only way to get through people is by building some type of relationship. And that is real easy with some people” (10, Interview). Rhina’s experience is similar:

I’m cool with some of the security guards. That’s points for me. I’m not gonna bring a gun or a knife even into school but I came in with my

belt, bracelets, and she said, 'you got something on you' and I said, 'na'. She let me go ... I'm gonna say it straight up, it's wrong because [students] might have something on [them], but it's the quickest way you can get through (5, Interview).

Similarly, Rafael referred to getting through as having 'privileges': "Like some people got privileges to the lunch room. I got privileges to the locker room. The students that try to go in, they're like 'no, you need your program card, you need your program card'. All I do is 'yo, what up' [and] walk straight in" (19, Focus Group).

The downside of these "free rider" transactions is frequently noted by several students. Many of them started to feel like those doing right by the system were punished for it, as one male student noted in our focus group conversation: "there are a lot of kids in the school that are on the sports teams [who are on] their cell phones, iPods, and PSP's and it's messed up that the kids like that get to bring their stuff in and all the kids that are doing the right things are punished. They are still trying to do the right thing and follow the rules, but they are the ones who are punished for it" (5, Focus Group). Similarly, Christine recounted:

The problem is a lot of people in this school are not doing their job because they build a relationship. And it's like you can build a relationship with a student in a good way, but when you know you have to do your job, you're getting paid to do your job. You say you want people to graduate, do their thing, go to college and stuff, but if you're hanging out with somebody who was suppose to graduate last year and they're still not going to graduate this year that kind of looks bad on your part because you're feeding into their [not graduating] (33, Interview).

This theme of gaining friendship by not going to class is expressed by Lloyd: "Like when, the kids like, they cut school. Well they don't cut school, they cut classes: they're in school but they're not going to class. So you know, the deans and the school aids, they

see them all the time, so they're always saying what's up to them so that's how you develop a friendship with somebody" (1, Interview).

Interestingly, many of the girls I interviewed spoke about creating friendships with security. In one focus group with both male and female Baldwin students present, students such as Dred concurred that, "if you're a girl, they are a little more lenient" (18, Focus Group). One of the girls in the focus group responded: "I get allowed into the lunch room all the time because [I'm female]." She purposely avoids the female security guard, however. "So you go around and it's one of the new guys who doesn't know me at all. I just give him a smile and say 'hey, let me go.' Smile, flirt a little, and he let's me go" (18, Focus Group). To that, one of the boys noted, "I have a free period in 8th and when I try to go in there they don't let me go in. They stop me and say 'you can't come in here on your free period'" (18, Focus Group).

Girls also notice the unfortunate circumstances that accompany befriending the school aids, who they say are "not professional and "don't care about their jobs" (4, Interview). In the same focus group, one female student noted:

My friend, her name is Crystal. Her brother was here today as one of those aids with the regular clothes on. I'm going to the bathroom. He started today and he's already getting on a girl who has her book bag ... You just started today and how are you already doing that, you know? And he ask me, "where are you going?" I am like, "do you not see my hand? Do you not see this big blue pass that says bathroom?" (21, Focus Group).

In the same conversation, another female student continued: "And the girls are so ignorant. They continue to talk to them like they have no respect for themselves, so [the

school aids] think they can treat every girl like that, you know” (21, Focus Group). While another added:

They make you feel more uncomfortable. Like I hate passing by a crowd of guys in the first place, but then when I have to go to school with people who are suppose to protect me, but they're hitting on me you know. It happened today, it happens to me every day when I go to the bathroom, they're like 'yo ma.' (4, Interview).

Forms of appropriation: Inviting the gaze

Because performances can be found in every social action, the analysis of performance means considering enacted human behavior as the fluid process through which we become and make meaning (Phelan 1998, Butler 1993, Sedgwick 2003).⁹⁵ But though performances employ strategies for survival within normative, compulsory systems, and make use of multiple forms of power, they are not always subversive. Judith Butler cautions that performances run the risk of “becoming deadening clichés through their repetition” (99, 1990). Similarly, James Scott states that though all social actions are performances, in many instances the defining quality of institutional power and authority “means not having to act” (29).

Considering the aspects of performance that I found and observed among the youth in my study allowed me also to consider the kind of theatre that pervasive surveillance invokes. It offered a way for me to think about the political nature of youth resistance without extracting it from the context in which I found it. In the many examples, I noted an ambivalence associated with being the subject of the gaze. Inviting

⁹⁵ Of course, a wide range of scholars have weighed in on the definition of performance, some more usefully than others. Sociologist Irving Goffman recognizes the presentation of self as communicative labor. Performance theorist Richard Schechner claims that performance is “twice behaved behavior” (11, Phelan 1998). They can be a politics of disguise and anonymity often designed to conceal identity (Scott, 1994).

the gaze also means deflecting some of the sting of it. One example comes from Tahani, a Palestinian-Muslim youth and member of Urban Word NYC, who is used to a fair amount of heavy surveillance in almost every pocket of post-911 New York City, including her home in Brooklyn. Her approach is to put the heavy surveillance its place, by being open to it: “you can watch me, go ahead. There’s nothing that you can pick up, but as long as you’re watching, you’re going to learn something along the way. If I can reach that one person who’s watching me when I prove to you that you’re wrong” (4, Interview).

In a slightly different way, Jason reported what it feels like when somebody watches him: “When somebody watches you, I kinda feel admiration – people could either love me or hate me I don’t care; and I’m always writing and I’m always speaking out loud like I don’t care if people watch... you’re the center of attention either way... Cuz I’m just always active in everything I do and if people watch me, let ‘em watch. Those are their own eyes, I can’t tell them not to” (31, Interview). Another instance of Jason’s ‘street smarts’, as he calls them, can be seen in his statement:

I know the guy doesn’t like me, I know there’s going to be watching me. Period. I go to a place that I don’t know, first thing when I walk in, is I look at the dude, I try to establish a sense that I’m just here to buy stuff. If I see him, I’m like “good morning” or “how are you” or, you know, not walk in with my hat low or nothing like that, just a sense of trust that I’m just here to get the stuff and wanna go home, no problems (35, Interview).

Jason’s effort to perform in order to ‘prove them wrong’ is one that fits the normative and compulsory system of racial profiling that so often occurs in locations throughout New York City.

In Rafael's case, the idea of increased surveillance makes him feel "alive. They know I'm there, so they're watching me . . . like I feel studied, examined, like I'm their hamster and they're the laboratory. . . It makes me feel alive because I know at any moment I could startle, surprise them, or something along those lines." When I asked him if this was a positive or negative feeling, Rafael told me "it could be both . . . it depends on the situation" (4, Interview). As one of the first students to decide to take part in the walkout at Baldwin, Rafael definitely had a sense of his role as an instigator of change and a protector of his fellow students. His bravado is apparent in the following statement: "if it was me being watched 100% of the time, I'd be like, 'okay, I have to watch my moves', but while I'm watching my moves, I'm gonna find ways to slither through their surveillance, so I could hit them by surprise. Also it could be they know you did something and they're watching you just in case you do something again." He went on to tell me that the act of being watched influences people to instigate trouble: "I've seen a couple people – 'oh, this dean is watching me constantly, I'm gonna just go up to them', and they get in trouble" (5, Interview).

It is in these ways that surveillance can often feel like a spotlight for performance. The way students choose to perform in the spotlight, as these examples suggest, depends on many factors: their mood; their assessment of risk and reward; and the kind of visibility at a given moment. K~Swift used the metaphor of a spotlight to talk about surveillance. In response to a passage by Ralph Ellison⁹⁶ that he read during our

⁹⁶ "In this dark light "high visibility" and "in-visibility" were, in effect, one and the same. and, since black folk did not look at themselves out of the same eyes with which they were viewed by whites, their condition and fate rested within the eye of the beholder. If this were true, the obligation of making oneself seen and heard was an imperative of American democratic individualism. it even raised the possibility that whites didn't always regard one another with the same focus of vision – but that was another matter." (351, from "A Special Message to Subscribers" in *Working Notes on Invisible Man*)

interview about being watched, he noted that “invisibility is a result of a desire to be invisible in response to the spotlight being beamed on someone. In this sense, the spotlight is on young black males, which is the metaphor for criminal in society.” When I pressed him on agency within the spotlight, he reported that the most important thing is to be “in command of the spotlight or you want to be in the spotlight. You shouldn’t be surprised” (1, Interview).

An analysis: Tactical Avoidance and Appropriation

School surveillance and policing policies are subjecting urban youth to a stunning lack of privacy, conditioning them to being watched at all times and from every angle, and offering students with disciplinary and academic problems mostly punitive options. Although tactical avoidance appears limited in its ability to confront the issues these students face inside their schools, it functions as a surprising and significant family of responses to surveillance.¹²

Tactical avoidance, however, represents only one point on a spectrum of possible responses. Students intimately understand the paradox of school “safety” measures which, in an effort to protect students, actively criminalize them. In a certain sense, schools function as formative spaces for teaching middle-range students how to navigate the cumulative effect and wider terrain of citywide surveillance. The outcome is a school environment of suspicion and distrust—one which is neither conducive to sustained safety nor collective resistance.

Because they experience surveillance as ‘eyes on me regardless,’ escaping it, or trying to confront it directly, is infeasible. Such agency fits well within the framework of

Ashforth and Mael, who argue that such resistance may best be characterized as diffuse, not directly targeted at the threat, and always unauthorized. In her article on the formations of African-American students' resistance to school, Regina Day Langhout (2005) also suggests that targeting a specific threat or act of injustice depends often on how much power the resistor has, and that because "children in school settings do not have a great deal of power, it is important to look for diffuse acts of resistance" (p. 125). Tactical avoidance therefore grows out of a lack of power in a given setting. Students have actively strategized to deploy effective forms of resistance within the range of their power, or lack of it.

These tactics function within a lived world, in which students also participate in their own surveillance. Schools are sites of dual, if not multiple, surveillance. Tactical avoidance works as a means for *not resisting one thing* at all; it means dodging multiple gazes. It implies learning to be performative, chameleonic, and savvy. In this sense, it relies on an astute reading of any given situation and a quickness of individual response. If it is collective, this collectivity occurs in the transference of knowledge marked by the "hidden transcript." It is not collective in the 'one size should fit all' sense of traditional resistance scholarship.

Finally, because the threat of being singled out by authority for doing something wrong is so real, tactical avoidance represents a form of individualized, often isolated resistance: a 'to each his own' kind of attitude. This evokes the sense that one can evade authority best when one remains solo and under the radar. But it also signals that diffuse resistance can happen in small, unified groups as evidenced by David and his group of

friends when they choose to “take another route” to avoid trouble with security without even verbalizing it to each other.

Within this complex framework, appropriation can take surprising, if not counterintuitive forms. One instance of appropriation involves the use of building salient relationships with authority figures in order to move about more freely in spaces of heavy scrutiny. Students note a fine and awkward balance between their efforts to create relationships and the privileges and risks that come with these relationships. An alternate version of such appropriation has to do with inviting the gaze of surveillance in order to deplete it of some of its disciplinary power. In these examples, students distance themselves from injustice (the sting) of being so heavily watched and scrutinized by leaning into the spotlight itself. By appropriating some of its light, students suggest that they achieve some modicum of command over how they are watched.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Hollander and Einwohner suggest that understanding resistance requires understanding the “interaction between resisters, targets, and third parties” (548). While I have paid special attention to the voices and perspectives of youth in this chapter, student testimonies also reveal how the technologies and techniques of school security create an atmosphere of suspicion and disrespect -- one that runs counter to the premise of education and sets the stage for particular, tactical patterns of everyday resistance. At the

⁹⁷ For schools that value smaller learning communities, student participation is essential. If tactical avoidance suggests something about how students resist macro conditions in which they feel targeted, demeaned, and disrespected, it may also go towards illuminating the meaning of their resistance to the more micro dynamics inside a classroom. At issue is *how* students participate in their education—which forms of participation offer young people opportunities to exercise independence while contesting and challenging authority. My concept of emergent participation, which is explored in the next chapter, offers us a way to think about student responses to surveillance that is potentially more sustainable than other types of responses.

same time, I have argued for the value of examining student resistance in the context of heavy surveillance. Viewing these behaviors through the lens of resistance helps shed light on the central role of power – and the injustices concealed through policies of security and safety.

This chapter has tried to suggest that student agency amounts to a powerful and varied response to surveillance; one that scholars may mistakenly ignore or overlook because these efforts do not translate into the traditional categories and canon of resistance—namely, organization, a unified mandate, and actions based in the workaday politics of the public sphere. Students are not organized, worry about becoming too visible to authority, and act independently of collective groups. Though my research on youth resistance raises the possibility of social change as an outcome, it is equally focused on highlighting the fact that youth are cognizant of and responsive to the injustices in their lives. This chapter argues that expressions of youth resistance are best observed on a wide spectrum of actions that range from avoidance to talking back to appropriation to organizing a formal protest. All of these expressions are efforts to be recognized, and, if carefully observed, often point directly to real injustice—and real, if not idiosyncratic, resistance. The weight of the problem, and the idiosyncracys of youth responses to it, should raise the stakes for scholars of resistance, rather than the opposite.

Given the likelihood that the country’s public schools will continue to adopt policies of containment replete with surveillance technologies and policing mechanisms, it will be important for such scholars to look closely at the ways students respond to these policies. Although it remains imperative that youth advocates, community-based

organizers, and academics continue to respond aggressively to punitive public policies that target urban youth of color, my research suggests that it will be of increasing importance to carefully examine the multiple ways students are already navigating surveillance inside their schools and communities. I am hopeful that activists will find ways to support their efforts—even when these efforts remain unsanctioned by the institution itself. Under the watchful eyes of authority, perhaps that is how they should remain.

Chapter Five -- Theorizing Student Poetry as Resistance to School-based Surveillance

Background

Covered extensively by local and national news media, Baldwin's student-organized walkout first alerted me to the school as the potential site for researching how students respond to school and community surveillance policies. When I began studying this subject, I thought I would unearth the seeds and outcomes of a large social protest against the metal detectors. But within days of beginning my research (which began about two months after the walkout), I learned that the walkout represented a disappointment and frustration for most students. Jessica's sentiment, as an example, sums up what I was hearing: "It could have been so much more and then it wasn't. I know a lot of [students] feel like they didn't really achieve anything. We still have metal detectors or we still have cops harassing us or embarrassing us in the morning" (9, Interview).

Thus, although the walkout was what initially drew me to my research site, the ripple effects of the walkout proved more interesting than the event itself. I came to realize that the protest merely represented the tip of an iceberg in terms of resistance. Its greatest achievement, in the minds of students, was that it had showed adults that youth do have a voice. This helped inform where I would look next.

My research coincided with the formation of an after-school poetry and hip hop club, which was organized by a small group of Baldwin students in the weeks after the walkout. Profoundly moved, I tried to capture my first day in the club in my fieldnotes:

“students saunter in to write, to create something that is theirs, and to let the pen bleed and walk lines storytelling. Planes fly over, someone whistles outside, the cars pass over, and in a room, words. A student reads over his poem; the bubble of pens” (1/15, fieldnotes). As my research continued and I grew to know the students in the club, I discovered that they had turned to poetry and hip hop as a vehicle to express their frustration and anger at school policy because, as Ben put it in an interview with me, “there’s no unity at the school.”

As I would come to learn, the choice to convene a poetry and hip hop club was no less a response to the school’s newfound policies than was the protest. And, in my own view, the club proved a much more radicalizing choice. As poet and essayist Adrienne Rich points out, poetry, in its “rejection of conventional expectations,” is “inherently subversive to dominant and oppressive structures” (2001, p.116).

In chapter four, I described the framework offered by Hollander and Einwohner (2004) for observing forms of resistance. Their categories were: action, opposition, recognition, and intent. Keeping these categories in mind, this chapter asks what roles student writing might play, not only as a vehicle of student narration and expression, but also as a vehicle of resistance. I will begin by detailing the important role that writing plays in the lives of my research participants. Then I will elaborate on the formation of Baldwin high school’s Hip Hop Poetry Club, *Spoken Ink*. I will show how it functions as an important and powerful response to surveillance. I will define this family of responses

to surveillance ‘emergent participation’ because it represents a hybridization and blurring of many of the distinguishing features of traditional scholarship on resistance.

In addition to my observations and interviews, the writings of my research participants provide data that offer additional and significant insight into how students experience surveillance at Baldwin. Drawing upon this writing, I will show how students initially used writing as protest. I will then show how their writing and the poetry club began to function as *varied responses* to the highly monitored spaces of the school.⁹⁸

Taken with other data collected in the field, student poetry can provide vital information for understanding what is likely happening across high schools across a broad spectrum.

I will continue to draw on the theories of James C. Scott. But I will also spend time meditating on the work of researcher Jennifer McCormick and poets Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. These researchers help show that student poetry must be understood as vital and emergent responses to the social conditions they inhabit. Their theories do not help us interpret the poems themselves, but they do help explain and interpret the particular context in which school surveillance, the after-school poetry club, and student poetry was enacted.

Finally, by drawing upon the concept of ‘sousveillance’ – *to watch from below* – this chapter will conclude by suggesting that youth writing, especially as it emerged at the high school, offers a way for students not only to protect themselves from the injustices they experience at the hands of pervasive and excessive school surveillance

⁹⁸ These include: metal detectors and scanners at the entrance and in the hallways, video surveillance cameras in the stairwells, constant presence of authority figures and peers in an overcrowded setting.

practices, but also an opportunity to record and actively respond to these injustices -- to watch the watchers, in effect.

Theoretical framework for the role of writing

In this section, I will briefly lay out a few pertinent theories related to youth writing. These studies are not intended to provide anything resembling a history of the vast archive of material on this core subject in the academic discipline of education. Rather, I have chosen these theories as emblematic and instructive approaches for contextualizing some of the ways in which youth writing has been understood within education.

In an effort to explore the diverse literacy practices of youth in school settings, scholars have recently begun to show how young people are often engaged in literate and literary activities such as popular culture and media influences, rap and freestyling, and spoken word poetry that often go unacknowledged in traditional school settings (Fisher, 2003; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2004; Dyson, 2003). These important studies have focused on ways to bridge these practices with the prior skills and knowledge necessary for academic literacies (Hull & Shultz, 2002). However, Mr. Greer, a former English teacher at Baldwin, lamented his difficulty trying to bridge the two in his practice: “Their style of speech and their style of writing and verbal performance is not recognized by the school. I mean here you’ve got these kids who have these skills, these really amazing, creative, analytical skills, and they can do it. But it’s just not in the style of the essay” (10, Interview).

At the same time, researchers have also explored how aspects of youth culture and literacy in out-of-school contexts, such as spoken word poetry and hip hop pedagogy might be considered literate practices (Jocson, 2004; Morrell & Duncan- Andrade, 2004; Fisher, 2003; Weiss & Herndon 2001). In a study examining spoken word poetry events and Black bookstore events, Maisha T. Fisher (2004) suggests that these events are considered educational institutions by their participants. She refers to these settings as Participatory Literacy Communities (PLCs), arguing that they implement important practices in literacy such as spoken word poetry, open mic events, bookstore events, writers' collectives, and book clubs (2). Amongst this group of researchers, literacy takes on several meanings: literacy as critical (Shor, 1992; Freire & Macedo, 1987); literacy as social practice (Heath, 1983); literacy as learned through social participation (Wenger, 1998); and literacy as democratic engagement (Kinloch, 2005).

In her rich study of student poets inside a New York City high school, Jennifer McCormick's (2004) *Writing in the Asylum* focuses on the role that poetry plays in creating a sense of security and self-esteem among the youth poets who must contend with the sterile, violent, and oppressive environment of an urban high school. McCormick's study, conducted in the 1992-1993 school year, coincided with some of the earliest implementation of metal detectors and police in New York City schools.⁹⁹ Although the focus of her study is the process of student writing, McCormick notes the dwindling school landscape as the backdrop that makes student writing such an important vehicle of self-narration. She describes the school as prison-like – with locked doors,

⁹⁹ The history of this implementation is elaborated upon in chapter one.

barbed wire, hand-held metal detectors, and uniformed guards – and argues that “schooling practices like scanning, metal detectors, x-ray machines, and uniformed police mimic the police surveillance prevalent in Black and Latino neighborhoods” from which many of the students come (4). In such a setting, many of the students channel their upset and frustration at security protocol into their poems. Their poems become an asylum. She argues that writing was akin to dreaming, allowing “the writer to reinvent how the sensory world feels” (2). Although McCormick’s study reveals how writing is a vehicle of self-narration, my research suggests that it is also an important, and often overlooked, expression of resistance – one that exhibits the characteristics of opposition, action, recognition, and intent.

Why Writing Matters: being heard

In my interviews with my youth participants, questions pertaining to writing often elicited the most elaborate answers. No matter how long a student had been writing and/or performing, they were keen to describe the value of it in their lives. As well, my experience working with hundreds of youth writers as the director of an after-school program in New York City helped corroborate-and undoubtedly expand—the responses from my research participants. Both affirmed Audre Lorde’s belief that poetry “help[s] give name to the nameless so that it can be thought” (Lorde, 37).

Participants described an amazing range of beliefs on why writing matters. In the following sections, student testimonials were chosen to represent the most commonly expressed themes and patterns that emerged *across* the interviews. They are expressed to help to frame further discussion about the significance of the poetry club and its

relationship to surveillance in the school. At the end of the following sections, I will analyze the hip hop poetry club and what I call ‘emergent participation’.

Elizabeth P. is also a member of an after-school spoken word organization (Urban Word NYC) and a writing organization for girls (Girls Write Now). Though she remains ambivalent about being called a writer, she is of the most committed writers in the group, and the founder of the Baldwin poetry club. I met Elizabeth in fall 2005 through Urban Word NYC’s Youth Board. There, she expressed the need for youth poets to come visit her high school in the Bronx. When I questioned her about why, she told me about the walkout. She described her failed attempts to create more unity at her school. Later, I would learn that she had decided to found the school’s first Hip Hop Poetry club soon after the walkout failed to materialize results. Although she noted that, as youth, they were not “supported in a way that we can use our writing for something powerful”, she went on to testify that:

... it’s not just writing to me ... I have to write ... that’s why I have tons of pens ... and I think a lot of it’s cuz how I was raised and how my parents couldn’t go to school and how my father can barely write. I take that seriously. A lot of people don’t like writing .. [but] it’s not just writing ... if you can’t write, what can you do? It’s almost as breathing and speaking. So I take it seriously (9, Interview).

For Elizabeth A., “writing is a gateway to being known. It’s an answer to misconceptions” (24, Interview). For Dean, these are the exact circumstances that might push someone to write:

I think these things pushed me into writing... A lot of times when a student first starts to write, he’s getting attention that he never received, ever, so you start feeling good about yourself. When you’re being watched, you don’t really feel good about yourself” (55-56).

For David writing offers an opportunity to distance oneself from being misperceived: “if you’re heard, then people know what you’re about and they’ll know your feelings about certain things, they’ll know you and respect you, not think you’re going to do certain things that you wouldn’t do just based upon your race” (26, Interview). Similarly, Christine noted that, in contrast to being watched, “being heard is you’re saying something, you’re being recognized because of how you think” (36, Interview). When I asked her whether there is a difference between writing and talking, she remarked:

Like when you say something, it can easily go through one ear and go through another and not be heard. But when you have a voice and you write it down, you know, [with] paper and ink, it’s like ‘here is how we feel. We put this in order and this is good. Really listen to the words that we’re writing because we’re writing it with feeling’. They can’t really deny it. They can’t really deny writing (38, Interview).

Private property

Christine’s notion that they [adults] ‘can’t really deny writing’ suggests a sense of ownership and control associated with the practice. This belief is shared amongst many of the participants. The control asserted in writing directly counters *the lack of control* and freedom students experience in spaces in which they feel heavily watched or threatened. This sense of ownership seems to outweigh any concern over whether one is watching, or even listening. I speculate that writing creates a kind of self-protective distance between students and the threat of any outside force, creating the very “dreamworld” to which McCormick often refers in her book (*passim*, 2004). David referred to this space as private property: “yeah, it’s like your own property. It’s like whatever you wanna say, whatever you wanna do, there [are] no restrictions” (27-28,

Interview). Similarly, Lolo insisted that this freedom makes writing a privileged space to which others much accord respect:

I feel free cuz when it comes to writing, there's no rules. Like when you typing an essay, you gotta think about all this—oh it's gotta be double spaced, you gotta make sure you spellin' right. Not with writing. You could spell words however you want, you know. You could say whatever you want, and you know, people respect that. And that's why I love, you know, spoken word in genera, because you could perform this stuff and you know, real—really personal stuff you know, and they'll look at you like 'Wow man, that was—that was inspiring. You know, I relate to you.' (24, Interview).

Jodi Ann noted that while “poetry really helps you to express yourself in whichever way you want to ... a way for you to express how you feel and it's just, yeah, it's a form of resistance”, she also considered that she may not be understood: “if you perform or whatever, you really let it go and people just understand where you are coming from. Some people will, some people won't” (14, Interview).

Truth

In fact, for Tyrone, writing enters a sacred terrain. He reported that writing is essentially about truth. What he chooses to write about must be true in order to warrant people listening. Referring to a novice writer who might make up stories or mimic the same themes they hear on popular radio, Tyrone noted that “if that's the best of they ability, then I'm all for it, but like, you know, you can't keep writing about it cuz it's going to get boring. Especially if it's not true. If you don't kill nobody, then don't write about it. If you don't sell drugs, don't write about it” (30, Interview).

Although there are several realities that bother him, namely “girls getting pregnant when they like, fourteen years old” and “everybody just getting mad at each

other and killing each other”, Tyrone also remarked that “I don’t want to feel obligated to write about that every time I write ... cuz that’s not my style (16-17, Interview). His comments reflect a desire to control both the substance and the themes of his writing; his writing provides a space for truth-seeking, and also for judgment. Emmanuel corroborated these sentiments and also reveals how seriously young writers take their craft:

it takes a lot of reflecting to know what you want to say ... it’s like ... our mission statement is not who we are, but who we’re trying to be. So there are definitely times when we’re going to fall flat on our faces, but the point is that we’re going to read those words and like that’s what I’m aiming for ... it may not be who I am, but that’s what I’m trying to be you know (17, Interview).

For so many of my youth participants, writing matters significantly in their lives; it is a gateway to being recognized differently from the way they might be perceived. Writing offers a sanctuary from misrecognition, and affords the intellectual space to confront difficult circumstances. In this respect, writing proves different to students than speaking. It commands a level of respect across all those who were interviewed. These students express a sense of ownership and pride in their writing that helps foster an important distance between how they feel and how they might be perceived. In this respect we might understand Tyrone’s claim that writing must be *true* in order to be effective.

Writing in school

Many of the youth writers who participated in my research had not been writers for long, but they had grown comfortable using writing as a tool to express what was happening in their schools. Rhina, for instance, felt compelled to write her first poem after the metal detectors went into the school. John hung out in the poetry club after-

school, but rarely wrote a word down on paper. For him it was enough to be around writers his age. Others, like David or Lolo, had been rapping for “as long as [they could] remember.”

Before the installation of metal detectors at Baldwin, students held lunchtime rapping competitions, or ‘cyphers,’ outside the building. Cyphers are closed circular formations where rappers and emcees, mostly boys, huddle up and compete against each other. Students generally refer to these cyphers as ‘battles,’ and the rapper with the most skill at rhyming, storytelling, and slyly insulting his opponent wins. Students reported that many of their favorite lines of poetry had come from, and acknowledged, in the litmus test of these cyphers. When someone ‘busts out’ an amazing line, the cypher ritually disperses. This signals that the line is so effective, it cannot be topped.

Surveillance obliterated the school’s conspicuous cypher culture. Once metal detectors were installed, more rules were enforced, and security guards became more visibly present, the cyphers were forced to stop altogether. Elizabeth A. suggested that the whole surveillance operation “changes the state of mind of people.” In referring to a friend’s account of attending another school with similar security and surveillance mechanisms, she told me:

*He said every time you walk into Brandeis [high school], it felt like a prison because he had to take everything out of his belt, everything out of his pocket, you know, security guards everywhere... To do it every morning and to come back from lunch. It changes your time. You know if you used to have a 15 minute cypher, you have to come in earlier now, so that’s not as possible. And just the whole, I’m either a prisoner or I’m automatically doing something wrong and I have to take everything out of my pockets and just the hassle. I think it changes the whole student part of **wanting** to cypher (29, Interview).*

From the very beginning of my research, students alerted me to the power of these cyphers and their disappearance as a result of the installation of metal detectors (and other surveillance practices implemented in their school). They were a casualty of these policies; one that at first appeared minor, but also represented the symbolic suffocation of student agency and voice.

The more I spent time with my participants and their writing, the more I found that their raps and rhymes offered them another language, a language of *distance*, an outlet for being *heard* and a method for *analyzing experience*. Poet Adrienne Rich states “we go to poetry because we believe it has something to do with us. We also go to poetry to receive the experience of the *not me*, enter a field of vision we could not otherwise apprehend” (1993, p. 85). I found this to be true of the students. Pervasive surveillance can suffocate and silence students. Responding to it through writing and spoken word became a way of coping that fell outside of the line of sight of authority.

One of the newest to writing, Rhina, explained that even though “no one wants to be here [at the school], this year has really made me to speak out... When I started writing, I became more into it. My writing became more angry.... Especially with the metal detectors, I started speaking back to that and I got more angry about it... .. I do feel like I have more of a voice this year especially. I feel more grown” (7-8, Interview).

Regardless of how long each youth had been writing, or what form their efforts took, writing performed many functions in their lives. Indeed, Fernando Carlo of Sistas and Brothas United reported an upsurge in writing activity among participants at SBU; activity was becoming more and more popular “not through the staff but through the

students who go to these schools with these situations.” He attributed this to the fact that “within the last few years, with all these new policies, I think it’s clear to see that things are a lot harder – besides the cops and the metal detectors – there’s a lot less resources, students aren’t taken very seriously; the way they’re being taught has definitely changed.” Interestingly, Carlo made the correlation between school policy and a decrease in extra-curricular activity stating that students

have less and less ways to express themselves. Look at most of these schools – there really isn’t music clubs, there really isn’t art clubs. After a while, once these new policies come into affect, those things do phase out. Because I was there for when it happened in Kennedy [HS]. We had a music club; it disappeared after we got the metal detectors and all this stuff. we had a structured poetry group where there was a teacher for it, that stuff phased out (6, Interview).

Finally, Carlo acknowledged the fact that students were willing to take matters into their own hands: “after all this stuff happens to them, they figure out that they need ways to express themselves and they start or they do poetry clubs, or they do spoken word things or slam poetry events” (6, Interview).

Formation of The Hip Hop Poetry Club

As students began to recognize the gradual and seemingly irreversible effects of the metal detectors on their school environment—“it’s a very unhappy place and not what you would call a learning place at all”—they began to envision new ways to “get their voices heard,” Elizabeth attested. When faced with dominant opposition, James C. Scott claims that subordinate groups perform “feats of imagination” in which they imagine a “total reversal of the distribution of status and rewards” (p. 80). One such imaginative

response and, I argue, the most enduring, was spearheaded by a group of young writers who were frustrated with the lack of student unity and voice at school.



Elizabeth Perez at poetry club.

Soon after the walkout in September, Elizabeth Perez started to talk up the idea of a poetry club to her friends. Although, as Jessica Sosa suggests, the seeds of the club had begun to take root the year before. She told me:

It was so funny because Elizabeth was in the club I was president of [Aspira]. My first year as president I was a junior and didn't really know what to do.... And whenever we thought about an event or anything, her little crew will be 'let's write poetry' or whatever. I was like 'wow, we have so many poets'... And those are the same group of people who make me like 'wow, see how they're so united'. They were just like 'yo, why don't we make our own club?' Okay. And next year, boom, hip hop poetry club and they're all taking leadership into making it happen (24, Interview).

David explained how he got involved:

[Elizabeth] wanted to start a poetry club because there's a lack of writing clubs in the school and she started the whole thing. Basically what she did—she went around and started recruiting kids. There weren't no flyers around the school for poetry club; she wandered around the school. I

remember she told me about it cause it was like the first day of English class and we had to write an introductory paragraph, introducing ourselves, and in it I said I like to write poetry, so [later] she was like 'oh, join the poetry club'. I was like 'okay. She just went around recruiting people, that's what she did (27, Interview).

As David testifies, the club was founded by word of mouth more than anything. One factor in the club's success was the guerrilla recruitment tactics that it employed--- hybrid acts that were out of the line of sight of authority but which remained participatory in effect. It is this subtle, evasive behavior which I call "emergent participation." Rafael recalls, "there were a lot of people in the school who know how to speak up and talk for themselves but none of them had the courage to do it, so Elizabeth came to me and said, 'let's start a poetry club to get people learning how to speak out, get their voices heard', so I'm like 'okay, you know, I doubt that it would, something like that is not likely to happen' ... It came the middle of September to the late, it started up and I was really surprised" (10, Interview).

Adult Support

Although the idea for the club had been percolating for months, it took the walkout to finally get Elizabeth to do the necessary work to get the club going. This entailed getting official approval from one of the Deans; finding a teacher advisor; locating a classroom in which to meet; and recruiting participants. Motivated to start the club, Elizabeth was fed up with the fact that the school gave "so much money to the football team and then the poets are left to fend for themselves." She angrily told me: "Any type of non-sports or school spirit typa thing, we don't get recognized. Like even the marching band, like they have to take money out their ass to buy uniforms. And it's

like you have money for these fucking metal detectors and you don't have money for a poetry club. Like we don't ask for much; just give me a pen and paper" (8, Interview). Within a few weeks, Elizabeth had been referred to Mr. Greer, who agreed to be the advisor for the club, allowing students to meet after school in his well-lit classroom on the third floor.

Although it was by accident that she found him, Mr. Greer proved to be the ideal advisor for the burgeoning club. As the AP English teacher at Baldwin for over five years, Greer was well-liked among students and teachers. His classroom was spacious, with desks around the edges in a circle, and his desk in the front corner. On the board were vocabulary words, announcements for the animal rights' club and the hip hop poetry club, a Harold Pinter quote¹⁰⁰ next to a photocopy of a dog and his leather jacket hanging from a hook in the corner of the room. One of Greer's famous policies was that if a student was going to cut another teacher's class, they were invited instead to sit in on his. Rafael was a frequent visitor to his class for this reason.

After the walkout, Mr. Greer reorganized his research unit around the theme of 'miseducation'. One of the first projects for this unit involved a student survey asking whether students felt they had a voice -- 80% of students in the school reported that they did not feel they had a voice. In addition to being a thoughtful and progressive educator, Greer was a very respectful advisor to the poetry club -- often clapping, cheering, and sometimes crying after a student read a piece. When students admitted to crafting a recent poem in one of their (less than inspiring) classes he volunteered that it was "a good use of

¹⁰⁰ "I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinchingly, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination as citizens to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory."

your time” (2/7/06, fieldnotes). Although he chose to hang back and let the students do the work in the club, he was always willing to take part in the writing exercise, to voice an opinion, or challenge a student. His many years of experience as a teacher proved the perfect balance for the poetry club. He testified that “one of the best things that emerged from that protest was that [it] galvanized a certain group of students ... It wasn’t just Elizabeth Perez’s power or her unique ability to organize people. But it also wasn’t just like surveillance and then poetry club. It’s sort of, they both came together” (8-9, Interview). Greer was an ideal advisor because he recognized the frustrations beneath students’ desire to write, and helped find ways for them to express it. He told me: “They felt besieged. They felt like they were treated like animals and like they were criminalized. And the poetry club was a place where they could voice those things and sort of generate their own ideas” (9, Interview).



Mr. Greer and several members of *Spoken Ink*.

As the year wore on, the sting of Mr. Greer's departure (he was leaving to help start a new small school in Bushwick, Brooklyn) began to register with students. He was highlighted in the yearbook as the 'Teacher of the Year' and, in June, club members organized a going away party in which a few of them read aloud poems crafted in his honor. Others spoke kind words. For instance, Jessica Batista told Mr. Greer that he was "a good teacher and a good friend. I admire you a lot and I don't like teachers"; whereas Rhina confessed that she admired him because he "had enough respect for me to tell the truth", and Elizabeth and Lolo made it clear how important he was to the poetry club, "without you, there would be no poetry club" (6/12, fieldnotes).

Building Identity

By January, when I first went up to the high school to observe the club, roughly fifteen students sat in desks formed in a circle¹⁰¹, took part in short writing exercises (led by other youth), and read aloud their free-writing or poems they crafted around an assigned theme. I was initially surprised by how student-run it was; there was a president (Elizabeth) and a secretary (Jessie) – both of whom made announcements at the beginning of the meeting and led the group with infectious authority and leadership. In my fieldnotes, I recorded my initial perceptions:

She leads them to freewrite, a future councilwoman, or better, a lone leader making change; and they write, heads titled, all thirteen of them, resting, trying to settle into the pen and paper, while the leader lady gets her agenda in order (1/15, fieldnotes).

¹⁰¹ The most consistent members of the club were: Elizabeth Perez, Jessica Batista, Jessica Perez, Anthony 'Dred' Stafford, Ben Torres, David McNeil, Senica Lipez, Ayesha Akhtar, Lloyd Sykes, Rafael Paredes, Rhina Duquela, Shumona Shimi, and Jonathan Brown. Every week, a few new faces would arrive. Some would stay; others would leave. My data comes from the consistent members of the club.

From that point forward, I came every Tuesday until the end of the school year. I was fortunate to witness a transformation among students, and to see firsthand how important the club was as a response to the school's surveillance policies. It was amazing to see the kind of progress they made. Many of them performed in Urban Word NYC's annual teen poetry slam (March/April 2007). Mr. Greer helped them organize further opportunities outside of the club to perform and read their work. This helped students build their confidence and improve as writers. It also helped crystallize the value of the club as a space of support and improvement. These supports were crucial to building group identity and supporting each writer individually. Towards the end of the school year, Elizabeth described the value of having a group of people with whom to write: "I'm scared of writing when it's just me and my notebook. I think when I'm writing, I'm so self-conscious about myself. I know I'm a good writer, but if I'm alone, I'm like 'yo, why am I writing this, this doesn't make sense'.... Like with the Poetry Club, that's the only thing that I can honestly say is what keeps me going to school" (2, Interview).

One of the most remarkable features of the new club was its ability to surface new voices along with students who were writers. Many of the students who participated did not identify as writers, but became writers by being involved in the club and surrounded by other writers. Rhina explains that the only reason she got started was because of a favor to her friend, David, who asked her to come sit with him on the first day of the club and she agreed. She testified:

I didn't even know David raps. I didn't even know any of those kids did any type of poetry. I didn't even know there was a poetry club. I didn't know he could rap. I didn't know he was that good. I read his stuff and I was like, 'oh look, it rhymes. Big words. Yeah okay'. And then he came up

and started rapping and spitting and I was like ‘wow!’ I heard that type of poetry from Def Jam and I was like, that’s cool, you know, they get into their things. I always wanted to ... but I was like that’s too scary. And then Raphael came up. And then Lloyd came out. And I was like wow! Amazed by all these people. I didn’t even know they wrote (7-8, Interview).

Similarly, Lolo, whose tattered and rubber-banded composition book showed the signs that he had been writing since middle-school, told me how the club and the members of the club influenced his own writing from the very beginning:

I felt comfortable because you know, truthfully, I was in a drought before I joined the club. I was just strictly [a] freestyle rapper. You throw a beat on, I’ll battle you, anywhere. But I started writing more, started thinking more about my rhymes and stuff. You know, a lot of people inspired that, you know Elizabeth, her powerful performances...she made me wanna perform better. Ben’s writing—he’s got a lot of details. He made me think about that. David is extraordinary and he made me think about that. You know, I take all these factors and I put them into one pot and I’m like ‘Okay, I’mma do this.’ You know? ‘I’mma do this right too’ (22, Interview).

Lolo captured the spirit of the club as I had observed it. Youth members were supportive and generous with each other. And the group was always open to learning new styles of writing. Although many of the students were not rappers, David and Lolo spent one of the club meetings teaching the group how to write raps, forcing everyone to write sixteen and thirty two bar stanzas that rhymed.

We all left the room that day freestyling our way to the subway. It was on this powerful occasion that I noted that the club and its members were starting to identify as a group. By then many of them had participated in the Urban Word teen poetry slam, and all of them had attended the Finals at Washington Irving High School with Mr. Greer.

My fieldnotes recorded this occasion:

They left the room and freestyled the whole way from the hallway to the street. The sun was setting; the club is starting to have an identity – I can

feel it, and I get the sense the Slam helped do that for them. Dred pounded the security guard's hand on our way out (3/7/07, fieldnotes).



David, Dred, Lolo, and John freestyling on the corner outside of Baldwin after poetry club meeting (3/7/06)

On several occasions, in fact, students hung out late after the club officially ended for the day, just to hear each other's new pieces. Being in the club helped some students overcome their shyness about writing and generally inspired them to keep writing, as Rhina attested: "I came just to see everyone else perform. And then Elizabeth told us to get into groups and take a line out of a poem and write a poem. And I wrote a poem and I didn't think it was that good, and Mr. Greer loved it. I still don't know why and it was actually published in the student magazine [*Magpie*]. I wrote another poem that week I was so inspired (7-8, Interview). In Lolo's view, the club members had similar perspectives, "we're like the only ones in the whole school that have these kind of perspectives you know, we could really relate to each other" (30, Interview).

Recruitment & Apathy

As the months wore on, the push to recruit new students was on the minds of the club's core members. They knew how powerful the club was for them and wanted it to be accessed by younger students. They spent weeks deciding on their name (*Spoken Ink*), decorated the school's main bulletin board with their metal detector poems, volunteered to perform for the entire school as part of its popular fashion show, and started to become more focused on drawing younger students into the fold. One of their recruitment strategies was to go into other classrooms and perform for other students. English teachers at Baldwin seemed to relish these visits, attesting to how inspiring it was to watch the students perform. And yet, while members of the club found these visits fun and exciting, they were also discovering that many of their younger peers were uninterested. Elizabeth suspected an underlying fear among students, "I wish that more kids would have the courage. Or try to ... I don't care if you write poetry. Just come and see what's happening. That's what I told them" (2, Interview). Students like David appealed to students during these visits too: "If you think you can write, I don't care if you know how to rap, come, Yo, it's fun. I'm always there, yo, you really think I wanna be in school at 4:30. No, yo."

Some of what they were encountering during their visits to other classrooms may have been the malaise that seemed to coat over the school and the students since the new security policies were put into place. I witnessed this even among the poets themselves when Jessica Sosa came in to discuss an organizing campaign sponsored by Sistas and Brothas United. Jessica was one of the chief organizers of the walkout and an articulate, self-possessed young woman. She spoke eloquently to the group of young poets about the

need to speak up against harassment by security guards and that metal detectors make schools feel like prisons. She said that “safety initiatives create fear” and that SBU was organizing to get “youth involved in the training of security” and advocating for more accountability and for more money to be spent on college counselors and resources other than security. In addition, she was asking the students in the room to sign their names to the provided postcards protesting the metal detectors and police presence in Bronx high schools.

I carefully observed the way the poets were responding to Jessica’s invitation. Although there is a natural affinity between poetry and activism, as poet Audre Lorde so rightly professed, many of the urban teenagers with whom I have come to know and work with not only through my research, but also as a teacher and as the director of an after-school organization for teens, have a conflicted relationship to political activism. This same tension was felt that afternoon at the *Spoken Ink* meeting Jessica visited. That day, heads nodded. And then nodded off. As she continued to talk, and field questions from Mr. Greer, I sensed a lack of engagement on the part of students in what she was saying. It felt almost like defeatism, but I sensed it was something else – that some undercurrent of hesitation and fear was holding them back. As she went around passing out postcards for her campaign, students reluctantly took them, and many ultimately refused to sign them and turn them back to her to be mailed to the DOE.

Similarly, Fernando Carlo expressed the SBU’s interest in utilizing youth’s interest in spoken word and hip hop, but conveyed equal concern for how to turn poetry and spoken word into organized activism: “I think it’s good because students get used to

speaking about these issues; I think the next step is that students get together and take some action. There needs to be a hardcore action piece attached to it” (6, Interview). I too was surprised how unenthusiastic these poets were by Jessica’s plea for help. After all, their poetry spoke about the injustice of the metal detectors, Bloomberg’s neglect, and the lack of financial resources afforded their school. Wasn’t this organizing piece just the natural extension to what they were already writing about? What was keeping them from signing up, getting involved on a more organized front?

As I came to know Jessica, I found that she was dedicated to issues of injustice and inequity. She had been trained as a youth organizer at SBU as a Sophomore, and was a committed member of their team and advocate of their causes in support of Bronx youth ever since. She was also intelligent and not afraid to address her concerns to students, teachers, or any other authority. Jessica’s sense of injustice in the school and in her community felt personal and emotional and vulnerable. Her activism also contributed to an acute awareness that the school’s metal detectors and security guards were creating a conditioning effect on students: an awareness most students I met had a hard time articulating.

I found Jessica to be able to articulate the hidden effects of school surveillance in a way few students could. This carried over to other issues of injustice. As an organizer at SBU, she had learned how to decode the symptoms of systematic racism and economic disparity and could speak at length and with great force about poverty, policing, and schooling in the Bronx. She was also committed to working as part of a team and organizing groups. She was irked that a few people who’d circulated the petition against

metal detectors and helped organize students to walkout had refused to work together with her and SBU. And although she was incredibly well-liked and respected, I sensed her political astuteness didn't always play well with some of her peers or with other students. In the room that day, the *mode* of Jessica's political engagement felt somewhat disconnected from the mode of engagement in which the poets were involved. Had she overlooked the spirit of activism already in the room?

Although the answers to these questions exceed the scope of this dissertation, and cannot be answered fully here, it is worth considering the way in which apathy, or what appears as such, might be functioning in much the same way as conformity does. On one hand, because the specter of surveillance loomed large at Baldwin, it often inhibited collective acts of resistance among students; visibility is not necessarily something they invited. On the other hand, as a form of resistance, writing occupied a privileged and important space in which these students could voice their dissent both individually and collectively. Scott insists that an "immense political terrain [that] lies between quiescence and revolt and that, for better or worse, is the political environment of subject classes" (1990, p. 199).

Can poetry constitute effective resistance?

Although the poets and hip hop heads in the room were not rushing to sign the postcards, my sense of the group was that they seemed inherently committed to writing about the injustices surrounding them, but that the group itself did not seek to have a uniform identity or political message. They were a 'crew', but they were individually motivated. Many were students in the specialized programs, but some were barely

attending classes (floaters). Writing as part of a group or a collective seemed to take advantage of individuality and collective spirit – aspects shared by strong political protests. Being a poet may not qualify as a formal, cohesive approach to organized resistance, but the torn-up shreds and scratches of paper that each student pulled out of their backpacks and pockets each week told a different story.

Students such as Dred, for instance, composed more rhymes than they knew what to do with. He would skip his after-school tutoring class (mandated by the school in order for him to stay and graduate) in order to participate in the hip hop poetry club, and would often hold the club after hours sharing his rhymes which were, to my ear, lyrically crafted and abundantly rhythmic. He seemed to rhyme on every syllable – internal and end rhyme – but also front rhyme (making use of assonance and alliteration). His raps were delivered to the group with a sense of play. Barely stopping for breath, the kid could write, write well, and loved to do it. And there wasn't a topic he wasn't willing to explore with his pen. His writing covered issues such as Black pride, a Higher power, the conformity of mainstream hip hop, racism, and love.

Not only was Dred (and the other members of the club) showing up every week and writing in the context of the club, they also were writing in other classes, in between classes, at home, and in their heads. They were experiencing political involvement – reacting to situational injustice, being outraged, processing the outrage, analyzing and coping with it – through their writing. And they were coming together to share it. More than protesting for a day or the length of a campaign, I felt these youth writers engaging in something much more long term.

When I probed this subject with some of my participants, almost all of them insisted that writing was “one of the most important ways of responding” to injustice. Elizabeth A. argued: “I think it’s a problem when people feel they can just write and speak and not do, but I feel like writing and speaking has sparked people to do. I think it’s an action.... *It always changes something* (29, Interview). Even Fernando Carlo at SBU conceded that “ I think for someone to sit down and write about what’s affecting them day to day – the time and energy it takes to do that – I think people need to look at that and realize that this stuff is serious and that’s why all these people are doing all this writing.” He lamented, “it’s just this transition to action is hard. Not that this isn’t the first time something’s happened ... how do people in a city deal with this, especially when it’s a policy and that people on the other side creating these policies are the ones with money and in office and with political power, and we’re not – *how do you do something that’s effective*” (6, Interview)? Perhaps Rhina’s response was most telling. When I asked her if she thought writing was a form of resistance, she told me: “No, because speaking up, you’re confronting the problem. But resistance is like you’re trying to get away from the problem. That’s my point of view. I think the walkout was both. They ran away from the going through the metal detectors, but they spoke up also” (10, Interview).

Analysis: The Hip Hop Poetry Club and Emergent Participation

Similar to the ways hip hop culture has mobilized urban teenagers since the late 1970s and functioned as a site of resistance (Queeley, 2003; Rose, 1994; Kelley, 1998), youth writing and spoken word can serve as both a site of resistance and a response to

surveillance. The creation of an after-school hip hop poetry club (an emergent community of writers and performers) is only one example of what might constitute sustainable resistance to the conditions this dissertation addresses; but it is a particularly noteworthy one because it also generates the possibility of student freedom and intellectual advancement among other advantages. In this way, it qualifies as a response that is both emergent and participatory.

Jennifer McCormick (2004) argues that while poetry is limited in its ability to remedy “the structural failures that have plagued New York City’s public school system,” it does provide a space—an internal asylum—“for lament, fantasy, and elation” (p. 7). Baldwin’s student writers, who founded the club which became known as *Spoken Ink* and whom I came to know over the course of my research, not only used poetry to comment on and speak back to the conditions in their school, but also transformed for a couple of hours each week a threatening space into one in which school-wide surveillance became least conspicuous. James Scott contends that social spaces such as these “are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power” (p. 119).

Much of the writing in the first few months of this after-school club specifically referenced the conditions in school. Although students attested to “getting used to” the disciplinary effects of the school’s surveillance measures, their writing expresses the rage and disappointment they often feel but cannot express openly to those in authority. Writing offers them a space (within the space of the club itself) to rhetorically question, vent, and talk back, as a selection from Rhina’s poem reflects:

*We don’t need no metal detectors to keep out the knives
Take out you stapler and all of your pens*

*I'll stab and staple a trick and get ten day detention
Juicy juice in the school
Great no soda
Keep the sugar level low and keep students from rising up
Against staff they didn't like and stuff they be hating
I got a walkie-talkie at home
Am I in for a good stabbing?
That's all the school aids are; students with big ass phones
They dress and act like us and start trouble wherever they go
There's no way to know who our oppressors are
They're like undercover agents with ghetto ass accents*



Rhina Duquela performing for the first time at Urban Word NYC's Teen Poetry Slam (03/06).

Neither the walkout nor tactical avoidance brought about the removal of metal detectors, however, both helped generate the need and desire for ways in which students could safely voice their frustrations and concerns. In their conceptualization of learning as situated and socially constituted, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) argue that participation in social practice is crucial to knowing. They offer the concept of “legitimate peripheral participation” as a conceptual bridge between the “production of knowledgeable identities and the production of communities of practice” (p. 55). While students tended to experience the walkout as members of a group, somewhat eclipsing

their individualized roles as agents/actors (which helps explain why students didn't organize another walkout and also why they were so critical of it), their participation in *Spoken Ink* was both as an individual and as a member of a group. Certainly the ways in which students contend with school surveillance offered myriad learning opportunities.

In this sense, the walkout made the club possible because it exposed the value of participation and the potential for growth and learning. Although tactical avoidance is expressed as an isolated experience and an individualized response, it is also a form of response that remains open to participation in just such a common struggle. *Spoken Ink*, by way of contrast, is a response to surveillance helped transform a site of containment into one in which students and their thoughts are actively sealed off not from the effects of surveillance (as the poetry certainly goes to show), but from the guards themselves.

Little by little, as the months wore on, the club became the safest and most productive place for learning at any hour of the day. As they progressed, the poets caught the eye of other English teachers who, in turn, invited members to come in to their classes and perform poems and raps for younger students. Elizabeth attested that talking to freshmen about school or about any of their concerns is one of the most powerful aspects of being a member of the club:

We went to visit two freshman classes and I can honestly say that that was one of the best things we could do. I read this poem called 'Air Jordans' [from Aloud! Anthology of Nuyorican Poets] and the poem was about how this student [dealt with] peer pressure ... and he killed somebody for his sneakers cuz he didn't have the money. And although we don't see that as much now, I still read that poem because it still has value to it. And then David read his poem 'Changes' about how we need to get together, go to school, this and that. Lloyd talked about his relationship with his mother and how it isn't good but that he still has respect for women. And we just talked to them. We told them, 'we're your age, we're no different than you, but we see things and hopefully as freshmen you guys can see

what's going on around you.' And Ayesha, she was amazing. She read a poem about a 17-year-old girl who gets pregnant from a 35 year old. And they were laughing. And I asked them, 'Why are you laughing? We have a Life Center on the 3rd Floor.' I asked them, 'How many of you know a teenager who's pregnant?' Only two people didn't raise their hand. Everybody else raised their hand. And I'm like, 'So why are you laughing?' That hit them hard and they were like, 'oh shit.' So, I feel like that's probably going to be one of my highlights leaving high school... Our poetry was the back-up. The best thing was us talking to them (7, Interview).

As Elizabeth's statement attested, the hip hop poetry club was a community of practice that engaged in the "generative process of producing its own future" (Lave & Wenger, 57-58). Members were not simply concerned with displaying their talents for writing and poetry, but also wanted to communicate with and pass along knowledge (the hidden transcript) to their younger classmates. One of the club's strongest initiatives was to "recruit younger students." These efforts at communicating with classmates were not sanctioned by the institution, and yet they were vital to establishing autonomous spaces where students could exist and breathe *within* the surveilled environment of the school. That *Spoken Ink* was created by students for students is a reminder that spaces such as these are not gifted, and do not merely occupy the "social space left empty by domination" (Scott, 123). Though they can be supported and facilitated by authority figures such as teachers and counselors, clubs of this kind must be "won, cleared, built, and defended" by those who need them most (123). My research findings suggest that conditions in these schools are dire enough to warrant fighting for spaces of this kind, and that students are capable of creating and sustaining them on their own with minimal (but some) support from an encouraging teacher or advisor.

Within Ashforth and Mael's framework, emergent participation troubles the dichotomous framing of resistance. It represents a hybridization of the distinguishing features of resistance. It is neither authorized nor unauthorized; neither facilitative nor oppositional. It is both. Writing, in the context of *Spoken Ink*, and under the gaze of suspicion, comes to represent both an individuated and collective form of resistance. While it is truer everyday that schools represent sites "marbled with liberatory possibilities and predatory surveillance" (Ruck et al., 2), what we learn by looking at the multiple ways in which these students responded to their school's decision to install metal detectors is that they are often seeking ways to participate within this marbled landscape. And that as such, participation in school, and in their own learning—whether it be showing up at the door each morning only to be held up at the metal detectors or staying late after school to write rhymes with peers—must be considered as existing on an open-ended continuum of resistance.

Coping with Surveillance

The last half of the chapter will feature student writing. I will introduce and analyze three student poems and prose piece and then conclude by considering the concept of 'sousveillance' as a way of thinking about writing as a form of resistance through counter-surveillance.

As I consider such writing as a form of resistance, it is important to remember the context of multiple jeopardy and surveillance that surrounds and informs this student writing. Chapter four illustrated several examples of student experiences at the metal detectors and helped make clear the power of surveillance to discipline and silence

students. Student reports clarify a fundamental feature of this surveillance; namely, that the power of surveillance is its ability to disrupt and silence public association and dissent (Schlosberg, 2006). Further, harassment between security guard and student is not just a one-to-one relationship, but multi-dimensional. It occurs in the context of one's peers and authority figures, and in a school space that depends *ideally* on an established sense of trust and order to function well. In its ability to separate and target individuals, surveillance renders collective opposition difficult.

Thus, trying to distance themselves from the power of surveillance to discipline and control, profile and patrol, is rooted not only in students' desire to resist its invasiveness but also in their effort to protect themselves from its sting. As an African-American teenager, David's experience with being heavily watched precedes the installation of metal detectors at his school. He is frequently given the message to turn around and leave as he enters a department store; and he is commonly stalked by security as he walks down the aisle of a drug store. In one story he told me, a jewelry clerk asked to see his money before he would show him an item he was looking at as a gift for his mother. One can feel his sense of powerlessness as he reflected upon these incidents:

In those type of circumstances, I feel like I should've asked them 'what are you doing, why are you watching me,' ... I hate it -- being watched like that. It's only because it's not worth my effort most of the time [that I don't say anything]. I can say it, but it'll go in one ear, out the other. They'll say 'okay, okay, [but] I'm still watching you'. It wouldn't change anything (25, Interview).

So when David began to encounter school security, he brought a similar attitude to school every day. As I would come to learn, his way of coping with such intense scrutiny was represented two ways; one, as avoidance, and two, as writing.

Being under the constant gaze of video cameras, metal detectors, scanning machines, and security guards who have the authority to humiliate and penalize students for any infraction, in an environment which portends to be safer yet allows for newer and more sophisticated ways for fellow students to bring in contraband items, should remind scholars of the limited options students have for collective resistance and outright protest in these spaces. Explored in chapter four, tactical avoidance represents one point on a spectrum of possible responses to surveillance, it may be one that comes at considerable cost.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James C. Scott (1990) maintains that conformity can be tactical and manipulative and thus “an art form in which one can take some pride at having successfully misrepresented oneself” (p. 33). He cautions that “evasion ... is purchased at the considerable cost of contributing to the production of a public transcript that apparently ratifies the social ideology of the dominant” (p. 33). Tactical avoidance evidences an awareness of one’s lack of power in a given setting and suggests that resistance to being heavily watched means *not resisting any one thing* at all; it means *not* locating a target, and relies on the quickness of an individual response; not a collective one. Because the threat of being singled out by authority for doing something wrong is so real, tactical avoidance represents a form of individualized, often isolated resistance: a ‘to each his own’ kind of attitude that does not lend itself to unified or collective protest. Nor does it offer an individual any greater insight into what, other than who they are avoiding, is keeping them down (i.e. the system, the policies, etc.).

This chapter has so far suggested that writing is a different kind of response – one

that I believe locates a target without running the risk of a confrontation with authority. Many students told me of the power of writing to give them a sense of voice and confidence. Others, like Rhina, found that writing helped her confirm what she felt and to verbally respond to the school's new policies. She stated: "especially with the metal detectors ... I started speaking back to that. And I got more angry about it, and about society in general and things like that. I think that's more of my specialty with writing" (8, Interview). Mr. Greer noted that the club itself became an opportunity for students to write specifically about their frustration with school policies: "it certainly was a major topic of conversation in the poetry club... It felt like, it got brought up explicitly every class. And it became a topic for the poetry club when they picked up on the idea of 'miseducation'" (9, Interview).

As the student poems in this chapter will show, writing about the realities associated with school policies may provide one of the most effective ways of maintaining some distance from the pain of policy effects. Raphael attested about some of the early writing that occurred in the poetry club: "... the students started writing about being watched and my friend, she wrote about how she felt her privacy was invaded because they kept telling her to take articles off and it was the wire in her bra... She was like, 'I'm telling you, it's my bra wire', and they were like, you're gonna have to buy new bras then. And she got really mad" (10, Interview).

Saying it metaphorically

Approximately, fifteen students, most of them juniors and seniors at Baldwin, met in Room 306 on Tuesdays after school. They sat in desks formed in a U-shape. David

volunteered to read his piece. He stood in front of the room – a silver Tupac Shakur chain dangled around his neck, his puffy North Face down jacket swallowed his graceful frame, his black Yankees cap covered his dark, attentive eyes. I sat and listened while he rapped from memory a piece he wrote called “Miseducation”:

Miseducation¹⁰²

*Yo I have a dream
That one day when I go to class
I won't be asked for a pass by a fucked up staff
They be spittin' madd game; got no comprehension
What the hell you gonna gain by giving me detention ?
Got their views all twisted; rules is incorrect
By locking us inside the building, who you trinna protect ?
For your safety-hats out of sight, keys away
Shit-I'm in Macy and I see a fight everyday !
Damn!- Were you successful 'cause I think you failed
Everyday I'm trinna wrestle ma way outta this jail
How I walk into the building - I'm already depressed
'Cause when I look at all the children-half of them is undressed
Yo how you trinna protect us-with metal detectors- and when we say you wrong you say
"Don't try to correct us"
Damn- We got the right-You messin' up our year
Everyday I wake up and I dread to come over here
Treatin' us like animals - imprisoned creatures
And yo - I'm really gettin' tired of this same old pizza
Damn that can't be healthy - yo there gotta be more
Yeah I know the school aint wealthy but come on - we aint poor !
Yo the status of our school is gradually decreasin'
All the things we once removed is constantly repeatin'
I'm trinna get to my class - I gotta walk through a crowd
And all the lessons is bad - because the halls is too loud
Shit they tried to make us better but they makin' us worse
Yeah they put in the detectors but that shit didn't work
Kids in the halls messin' up my concentration
I done seen it all- now I'm steady contemplatin'
Halls is full- gotta reason for procrastination
This is bull - They should use it as an indication
All the money they payin'
All the peace that they cravin'*

¹⁰² Poem written by David McNeil.

*All those things just went to waste
Just like our education...*

This poem was a response to a prompt that Elizabeth, the club's founder and president, had given them an assignment. "One of the first things that I told them to do is to write about the metal detectors. We wrote about the metal detectors and we wrote about education itself, and everything surrounded itself around metal detectors because that's what we were experiencing and that's what we were seeing" (8, Interview). In her landmark essay, *Understanding Composing*, Sondra Perl (1980) argues that "when writers are given a topic, the topic itself evokes a felt sense in them. The topic calls forth images, words, ideas, and vague fuzzy feelings that are anchored in the writer's body" (101, Perl). In the case of Baldwin's students, the topic of the metal detectors produced a 'felt sense' in almost every student in the club; and in David's piece we witness the rush of images, words, and ideas that accompany their felt sense. Perl continues, "when they [the writer] make the decision to write, it is after they have a dawning awareness that something has clicked, that they have enough of a sense that if they begin with a few words heading in a certain direction, words will continue to come which will allow them to flesh out the senses they have" (ibid). One of the best things about Elizabeth's prompt was that it locked into what her peers were wanting to flesh out. One other motivating factor was the fact that they were writing on the same topic, together.

After David finished his piece, his peers cheered, they referenced specific lines and detailed their own stories of interactions with the metal detectors. They laughed about the ever-present pizza for lunch; and swapped sad tales of friends being harassed by security. They referred directly to the writing itself -- the use of a particular metaphor,

or the sophisticated placements of internal, syncopated rhyme.



David McNeil performing his poem *Miseducation* in the Hip Hop Poetry Club.

David's poem features an abundance of detail that generates a lot of momentum until its rhyme scheme comes crashing down at the end. "Just like our education" -- Boom. One of the reasons spoken word and hip hop-infused poetry is compelling to youth is that it shoots straight, and often does not stray too far into the abstract. This poem's details enumerate so much of the fallout that a school experiences once security protocol becomes the *de facto* solution for a range of problems, including the school's over crowdedness, its misallocation of resources, its heavy-handed staff or security, irregularly enforced rules such as no hats or keys, lack of school spirit, or the negative stigma attached to schools with metal detectors.

At the same time, David's writing is expressive in both mood and tone. It expresses his frustration, cynicism, and disappointment. It is both general and specific, but guarded. While poems can express the underlying emotions of a given situation in the

way that relaying an experience often does not, David's poem sufficiently *removes* him from the experience of passing through metal detectors daily – an experience of silence and powerlessness – and allows him to talk back. It also remains unheard by authority figures. David himself testified to how he uses writing to talk back: “Well, like writing in general, people can express feelings that you can't express otherwise only because you can say it metaphorically ... Sometimes I feel a certain way and I don't know how to say it in conversation, I just write out a poetic piece [to] sorta express my feelings” (27-28, Interview).

During our interview together, I asked David to elaborate on his line about the status of his school gradually decreasing. He spoke at length about how he and other students knew that the consequences of surveillance policy were not just about not having their cell phones and not being able to go out for lunch, but about an increase in the rates of violence in this school from one year to the next. From our interview:

Jen: Tell me about this line “Yo the status of our school is gradually decreasing.”

David: Students' eyes, teachers' eyes and probably even the Board of Education -- now that the detectors are in, the number of students increased. Since they put them in, the number of fights inside the school has increased tremendously. Every day basically there's a fight inside the school cuz you can't go outside to do that anymore. And generally when you have a lot of kids in one area that's going to cause confrontation cuz that's a lot of kids and you don't have freedom and so that's why I'm saying it's gradually decreasing cuz last year wasn't as bad. There were fights, but they weren't as, you know, as immense as this year (20, Interview).

In relation to his testimonials about ongoing experiences with surveillance, David's poem served an invaluable piece of data because it offered me a sense of his active voice and

helped *qualify the powerlessness* I was hearing in his statements and was observing as we walked together through the hallways of school or into stores.

Cataloguing the wrongs

Ben's poem, provided below, also discusses the topic of 'miseducation'. Although his poem and David's were written independently, a kind of collective experience gets expressed and shared through their work. Several overlapping themes are readily apparent. Consider how Ben, like David, documents and catalogues the wrongs committed in the name of security and safety:

Miseducation¹⁰³

*Now when I walk into school listen
to what security has to say
"Good morning ladies and gentlemen,
Please take all metal objects out of
Your pockets, this should be done before
You get up to the door, make sure you take
Your belts off, cause if the detector goes off,
To the back you go, don't tell me, 'o mister I ain't know'.
Cause frankly, I don't care, whether you had a bobby pin in your hair,
or a cell phone stashed in your underwear, that's on you see?
Cause I guarantee, there's no way through security, so just
Please obey the rules, and you'll have a wonderful day at school."*

*So one morning I'm about to be walking in,
and they create this vibe like it's me against them,
Looking at me like I got the guns and knives,
But there are real thugs on the streets taking people's lives,
And yet they worried about D.W.C.'s¹⁰⁴ crime streak,
Which amounts to eight violent crimes in 43 weeks,
So they started to worry about the weapons kids was wielding,
But yet more than half those crimes didn't occur inside the building,
Wait, so more crimes happen outside the school,
And they go and put more cops inside the school,
Does that make sense to you, cause it don't to me,*

¹⁰³ Poem written by Benjamin Torres.

¹⁰⁴ Acronym of the high school.

*But probably, they got other agendas to meet,
Anyway, I go through the detector, and I set the alarm off,
I look at myself like "Damn, what did I forget to take off?"
So they pull me to the side and the guy rudely asks
"Please lift up your hands"
So I reply, "since when did cell phones and c.d. players
become contraband?"
Damn, I can understand, no weapons on the premises,
But you taking our c.d. players and cell phones, and on
What premises?
But they don't stop there,
Telling us we can't wear a shirt with a snowman?
Just because you think it is a cocaine slogan?
Now you see, they trying to stop the profanity,
But most kids don't deal drugs; kids wear it for vanity,
This shit is insanity, where's the humanity?
This is the canopy of neurosis,
Our leaders must have some sort of
Extreme psychosis, but know this,
Our generation does not support this,
Look at my face, does this look like bliss,
This is far from happiness, apparently the
D.O.E. is oblivious, and amiss,
They're nothing but a group of novices,
The Department of Education is full of people
Who don't think,
Millions of public school students uneducated,
Hmmm, What's the missing link?
Maybe it's the mis-education kids are given,
Considering how bad the system is, how
Are kids supposed to grow up and make a living?
Minimum wage don't support two children,
And yeah you got your G.E.D.,
But that don't mean shit unless
You got a bachelor's degree,
Cause without both of those,
You ain't getting no fifty g's a year,
So let me make this real clear,
This is a huge problem spreading
Throughout our nation,
Just don't fall victim to our country's
School system of mis-education.*

Complex and abundant in detail, sarcastic and informative, Ben's poem unfolds in the way a debate might. His is more of a narrative and helps to take the reader into the experience of passing through metal detectors every morning. At the same time, he indicts education as a holistic problem, letting no one off the hook: security, administrators, the Department of Education (D.O.E.), our national public school system. The sheer number of details in Ben's poem are overwhelming. The cataloguing effect, however, is an extremely important feature of the poem. It helps expose several wrongs in the same context, and, when performed, pushes these wrongs into the public discourse of the poetry club. In an almost journalistic form, Ben seeks to record as much as possible so that the reader can experience life as he knows it. This kind of writing style is in many ways cathartic for students because it allows them to actually name their frustrations. Jason testified to this: "writing itself helps me be more aware of life. Maybe you can't change it right now unless we all come together and have this big type of meeting... That's what happens when I write, whatever I write about, it'll all come out and it helps produce my intellect in the streets and in the classroom" (41, Interview).



Ben Torres performing at the Urban Word NYC Teen Poetry Slam (03/06).

Ben's tone is markedly sarcastic: "millions of public school students uneducated/hmm, What's the missing link?/Maybe it's the mis-education kids are given..." and helps remind us the way in which writing can function as a buffer between what hurts the writer and how it gets expressed. The blank page and the notebook serve as buffer zones. Referring to his notebook, Lolo stated:

It's extremely important especially when you think about all the stress it relieves, because you know, it's not just me as a student ... I go through a lot of stuff, you know, and sometimes you don't have people there for you. My book is always there for me, my book is always in my book bag. If I'm on the train and I got an idea, I'll pull it out and start writing. It's always there for me so, that's why it's really important to me cuz who am I gonna talk to? It's my best friend (31-32, Interview).

In fact, the notebook and the poem sit at a critical juncture between personal experience and explanation. They are a stop-gap between reflection and action, affording youth a space in which to discover and articulate what they observe, feel, and think while, at the same time, helping them to relieve stress and frustration.

Relieving stress

While it is invariably true that many experiences at the hands of security hurt and mark students, both Ben and David use their poems as a vehicle for diffusing some of the trauma associated with their experiences. Lolo put it plainly: “it relieves a lot of stress...when you talk about stuff it makes you feel better” (24, Interview). Furman, Jackson, Downey, and Bender (2002) studied the mechanisms by which poetry taps into inner resiliencies. They found that engaging in the creative process releases healing energies; breaks down the tasks of healing into manageable parts; and alerts individuals to the self-care skills they need to meet challenges. Tyrone captured this idea well when he told me:

School is stressful for some people, like no matter how you put it... some people write about it and it's like 'alright cool, I wrote this down. I'm done. This don't affect me no more'. But some people, they write about it and they see it and they [are] like, 'yo man, this is true, yo fuck this school.' You know, so like, sometimes it works, sometimes it don't. But when it does work, that's a good thing (16-17, Interview).

What Tyrone is saying is that writing can be a form of therapy, but it can also bring to the surface of one's consciousness issues that are difficult to face. Tyrone also reminds us that writing functions as an outlet where you can “fill this whole thing with all your aggression, all the pain that you have... releasing it on paper. You know how some people take their anger out on somebody else, they might just write about it and it'll calm them down (16-17, Interview).

As James Scott's theory of hidden transcripts reminds us, with this level of consciousness come the seeds of resistance and social change. Both poems reflect an

individual, as well as a collective consciousness about the ironies and injustices motivating school surveillance policies. While surveillance is often a personal experience, school surveillance policy systematically impacts every student. While it may appear from the outside that students attenuate quickly and conform to standing in a line outside of the school's entrance every day, removing their belts, jewelry, and ignoring the loud shouts from security, *it would be a mistake to observe their seeming willingness to put up with these policies as an acceptance of them*. One of the most crucial implications of these poems is that they reveal the other side of the appearances of compliance and unearth the seeds of what could eventually be a more sustainable and public form of collective contestation of school surveillance policies.

Writing together

The following poem, written collaboratively by three members of Urban Word NYC, illustrates how writing can serve to bring youth together by offering an intellectual and emotional space for expressing experience. Though these experiences may be registered in isolation, the iteration of the poem opens the possibility for plurality. Although this chapter contends that Baldwin's poetry club became a social site "actively sealed off from surveillance" (Scott, 121), it is important to remember that after-school programs also function as safe spaces for urban teens to congregate. As members of the organization, Tyrone, Jamilah, and Tahani were friends who sat in workshops and Youth Board meetings together, but hadn't yet had the opportunity to write collaboratively. That opportunity emerged when they became members of the 2006 Urban Word NYC Youth Poetry Slam Team.

I became aware of the seeds of this poem months earlier during my interview with Tyrone when he was telling me about being stared at on the train. He told me: “when me and Tahani was together... that is fucking crazy. Like people be staring at us, people be looking mad strange, standing mad still like this—because you see a big black kid and a Muslim girl, you maybe think that they’re gonna do something wrong” (5, Interview). He went on to tell me that, although he and Tahani often joked about it with each other, he started writing about these experiences. I asked him to recite some of it for me and he agreed.

If you see something, say something. See Tahani, say something, see Grizz with a mean mug on, say something. On the A train conversations say buzzin, Tahani and Grizz the reason you bitches wanna say something. It’s bad coming from Manhattan and crackers think that I’m a ghetto hoodlum, now I’m riding with my friend who happens to be Muslim ... (16-17, Interview).

As I listened to Tyrone recite the poem to me, it was clear he was riffing off the MTA’s post-9-11 *See Something, Say Something* campaign. It was then that I began to wonder about how youth were experiencing the City’s anti-terrorism policies. It helped confirm my suspicion of the cumulative effect of a daily surveillance that was now continuous with school security efforts.

Months later, when the 2006 Teen Slam Team had been decided and the poets started working on their collaborative pieces, Tyrone pulled his poem about he and Tahani out to see if they could use it as a group piece. Having all grown up in New York City, attended public schools, and experienced their share of racial profiling and discrimination, Tyrone, Tahani, and Jamilah were ready to work together to re-fashion

Tyrone's original poem into a collaborative performance piece. When I asked Jamilah about this poem, she told me:

it's a rebuttal against the See Something Say Something campaign... to me it promotes racial profiling. It really does. I don't want to say that it [terror threats] is not that serious, but I think the government has this thing that they try to instill fear in us and it just gets to the point where, okay, now you're abusing our rights. And I think that campaign is way out of control (1, Interview).

Although these three students did not attend Baldwin, their own schools all had differing degrees of security protocol. I asked Jamilah about how she felt about the metal detectors in her school: "it's a circular trap. What are you gonna do. The kids are bringing weapons to school, but then you put the metal detectors in, and it's like, what is this, a jail? I don't know, it feels like there's no solution. It's really scary" (1, Interview).

As they came together to write, and as the poem illustrates, Tyrone (AKA Grizz), Jamilah, and Tahani united around a discriminatory and threatening campaign, while at the same time holding to their own unique experiences with it.

See Something, Say Something¹⁰⁵

*As we stand at the end of the subway car train swerving back and forth we could hear the
Heartbeats of the people getting faster and faster
We clutch subway poles like we clutch racism in effort to mortify this something
something disaster*

*If you see something, **say something**. See Tahani? **Say something**
If you see Jamilah standing next to Grizz, **Say something**.
On the A-Train conversations **stay buzzing**
We are the reason you running' to go **say something**.*

*The woman across from me thinks that I might not let her make it home to her
children tonight or
ever again*

¹⁰⁵ Poem written and performed by Tyrone West, Jamilah Clark, and Tahani Salah. As a collaborative poem, the poets perform the piece together, and take turns speaking aloud, with all three on stage at once. The bolded parts indicate when they perform in unison.

*She wishes I had just as much freedom as she does
people think that I am on some militant mission to kill them.
This is not the cliché **black man** walks on to elevator white women cliché bag.
This is I'm going to kill you for a political statement.
I have nothing to live for but destruction.
All because you couldn't understand my faith.
So than you created this idea of a **savage**.
This inhuman beast.
With empty eyes to match the empty heart.
If you only knew how I fill trusty eyes with revolutions
How spoken word has freed me form literary shackles*

*If you see something, **say something**. See Tahani? **Say something**
If you see Jamilah standing next to Grizz, **Say something**.*

*The woman behind me thinks that I'm a ghetto hoodlum
Now I'm riding with my friend who happens to be Muslim.
They start holding on to their purse, start shaking in their boots
"She gon' blow something up and them niggers gon' shoot.
She belong to Al-Qaeda, they belongs to the Crips
And run around the streets screaming G-G-G-Unit"
They think 9/11 gonna happen again
And they think we'll cock it back and kill her and her friends.
If you see Jamilah, Grizz, & Tahani tell an MTA employee
Or police if you think they doing suspicious activity.*

***Suspicious activity? We just spitting poetry**
Certified Guerilla Poet, that's a name that fits me.*

*If you see something, **say something**. See Tahani? **Say something**
If you see Jamilah standing next to Grizz, **Say something**.*

*The woman on the side of me thinks I'm a fatherless **hood rat**
She's sure that I'm up to no good **that**
I speak in foreign tongues diverged from what the English language has become
She thinks that I have been struck dumb, drowned lungs with **ghetto**, she believes
me to be mute
As I part my lips she is confused by my encasement and my youth*

*There's no reason to be scared, I'm tryna get home, too
When I step on the train, I don't even think about you
I just wanna sit down, enjoy the ride, and take my ass home
So I'd appreciate it if you just left me alone.*

*We are tired of this misconception of our people
Because daily Travel has become daily scrutiny
So we write to clear minds of distorted visions.
We embody the antidote to this discrimination
in its overt contamination of our souls.
We stand bold.
So if you see something, say something that fosters freedom
Please say something that will free dumb minds
Please say something about this inability to vocalize
the truth about these written and vocal lies
that allegedly promote security
but truly promote the impurity of our minds with media imposed crap
So the next time you see something, say something about that.*

This poem sheds light on how many youth may experience stereotyping and racial profiling. Because the lines are fairly self-explanatory on a careful first reading, I will not elaborate on the content, but I do want to consider how the poem might function as a form of resistance similar to that of a ‘thirdspace’ which urban geographer Edward Soja defines as one of “the chosen spaces for struggle, liberation, emancipation” (68, 1996). In this way, the poem transforms a personal experience into a more overtly political or social one. The intellectual space of the poem, one expressed in the forum of spoken word, becomes part of the communal space of a shared politics, or sociality.



Tyrone West performing at Urban Word NYC's Teen Poetry Slam (03/06).

At the same time, this poem has several other features. Firstly, it is suggestive of why youth write communally; namely, that experiences such as these are too much to confront alone. Secondly, the poem reveals the heightened awareness urban youth bring to post-911 anti-terrorism and surveillance policies. For them it amounts to racial profiling. In the poem, authority is expressed as threatening, judgmental, and punitive. Although this authority is watching them, the poem exposes and talks back to it – dismantling it of some of its power. Finally, we can begin to see how the poem functions as a mutually-crafted hidden transcript where youth can redefine the terms by which they are watched and begin to unite and mobilize around a common injustice. When I asked Tyrone about this, he told me: “I think [writing] just brings people together. Like if you a school and then you have a poetry club... you share a common bond with them. Because you know ‘Oh, you write, I write too’” (16-17, Interview).

Analysis: Writing Binds Youth to Each Other

As the poems and their oration suggest, writing can serve to bring youth together

not only because the content of experience is often shared, but because the performance of these poems has the power to reproduce a private observation in the public sphere of the audience. This important power underscores the absolutely basic problem that it is not always easy for youth to find communal spaces in which to write. Poems can be figurative spaces where shared experiences get talked about and even felt in the plural. But beyond the page, the students at Baldwin craved a physical and shared space in which they could write together. It was not surprising then that students chose to form a club in the shadows after the failure of the walkout. It was the final, best opportunity to sustain the resistance. In this regard, we might understand James Scott's comment that "far from being a relief-valve taking the place of actual resistance, the discursive practices offstage sustain resistance" (p. 191).

Within weeks of the walkout, Baldwin students began to recognize the gradual and seemingly irreversible effects of the metal detectors on their school environment – "it's a very unhappy place and not what you would call a learning place at all," Elizabeth told me. Scott claims that, when faced with domination by powerful groups, subordinate groups perform "feats of imagination" in which they imagine a "total reversal of the distribution of status and rewards." These imagined reversals are not abstract exercises but are "embedded in innumerable ritual practices and ... have provided the ideological basis of many revolts" (p. 80). Scott insists that for subordinate groups such as the poetry club, resistance through political action and struggle are more constraining than through thought, imagination, and ideology (p. 91).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ We must also consider some of the potential problems with the after school poetry club—problems which, if dealt with appropriately, can serve as fulcrums for informed dissent. Frustrated with the lack of student unity and voice at school, Elizabeth started to talk up the

Writing, and the performance of writing, can become the glue that binds youth and their struggles to each other. It affords them a reason to become part of a larger cacophony of voiced youth concerns. Adrienne Rich also remarks

Someone writing a poem believes in a reader, in readers, of that poem. The 'who' of that reader quivers like a jellyfish ... But most often someone writing a poem believes in, depends on, a delicate, vibrating range of difference, that an 'I' can become a 'we' without extinguishing others, that a partly common language exists to which strangers can bring their own heartbeat, memories, images (85).

This 'common language' Rich evokes can also be understood in relation to Scott's hidden transcript – "the privileged site for subversive discourse" (27) – which takes place off stage, under the nose of those in power. The student founders of the club not only used poetry to comment on and speak back to the conditions in their school, but also *transformed for a couple hours each week a threatening space into one in which collective responses to school-wide surveillance occurred.* Scott contends that social spaces such as these "are themselves an achievement of resistance; they are won and defended in the teeth of power" (p. 119).¹⁰⁷

idea of a weekly after-school poetry and hip hop club to her friends. Although as Adrienne Rich points out, writing has the potential to alleviate the loneliness, frustration, anger, and isolation a situation can present, the opposite is also true. Reflecting on difficult everyday circumstances *in isolation* can lead also to increased frustration, deepening anger and hostility, perhaps even passivity and lassitude. Elizabeth puts it plainly: "having an audience allows me to talk, allows me to express."



Members of Baldwin High School's *Spoken Ink* Hip Hop Poetry Club.

Sousveillance

One final way of considering writing as a form of resistance is to see it as an example of what surveillance scholars call 'sousveillance'.¹⁰⁸ This term denotes 'surveying from below' or the act of 'counter-surveillance'. Although I will not explore the concept of 'sousveillance' at great length, I do want to conclude this chapter by considering it as a mechanism for thinking about the importance of writing as a means for recording and resisting pervasive surveillance. As discussed elsewhere, surveillance scholars tend to emphasize the conditions of domination and control. Scholar William G.

Staples (1997) notes:

A citizen's ability to evade this surveillance is diminishing. To venture into a shopping mall, bank, subway, sometimes even a bathroom is to perform before an unknown audience. Even if this kind of surveillance is relatively

¹⁰⁸ "sous" (below) "veillance" (to watch). Sousveillance as well as inverse surveillance are terms coined by Steve Mann, Ph.D. of the University of Toronto to describe the recording of an activity from the perspective of a participant in the activity[1], typically by way of small portable or wearable recording devices that often stream continuous live video to the Internet. Sousveillance typically involves community-based recording from first person perspectives, without necessarily involving any specific political agenda, whereas inverse-surveillance is a form of sousveillance that is typically directed at, or used to collect data to analyze or study, surveillance or its proponents. <http://wearcam.org/sousveillance.htm>

“seamless” as I have argued, it may function to undermine our willingness to participate in civic life and to speak our minds as clearly, openly, and imaginatively as we can (133).

While we can see the effects of surveillance on our civic life, Staples also argues that the forces of active resistance, protest, sabotage, non-cooperation, and liberty are also present. “If we accept the premise that much of the exercise of this kind of power takes place in the form of ‘local’ micropractices that are present in our everyday lives, then the sites of opposition are right before us. They are in our own homes, workplaces, schools, and communities” (135). Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to identify a host of micropractices present in student’s everyday lives, however overlooked they may be.

The basic premise of ‘sousveillance’ research is “to challenge and problematize both surveillance and acquiescence to it [and] to resituate these technologies of control on individuals, offering panoptic technologies to help them observe those in authority” (332, Mann, Nolan and Wellman, 2003). One of the best known examples of ‘sousveillance’ is the video taping of the Rodney King beating by George Holliday, an average citizen of Los Angeles, and his turning it over to local media outlets. Studies that focus on sousveillance point to a common feeling among surveillance scholars; namely, that as surveillance technologies proliferate so too do technologies which can disrupt surveillance techniques and expose power asymmetries (Monahan, 2006; Kemple & Huey).

In a recent article, Jamais Cascio argues that in the “participatory panopticon ... constant surveillance is done by the citizens themselves, and is done by choice. It's not imposed on us by a malevolent bureaucracy or faceless corporations. The participatory

panopticon will be the emergent result of myriad independent rational decisions, a bottom-up version of the constantly watched society” (WorldChanging.com). Cascio claims that the cameraphone (cell phones capable of taking pictures and video-recording) is the first of technological devices which will afford the everyday citizen opportunities to “watch the watcher.”¹⁰⁹

While the youth in my research cannot be regarded as “choosing” to undergo school-based surveillance, I do agree that these students are active players in their heavily and multiply surveilled cultural landscape. They are also consumers and users of technology. Were cameras and cell phones not banned from the schools in which my research participants attend, we might imagine students recording encounters with security guards in the hallways and then posting them on Myspace.com (to name one of several possible scenarios). Cascio reminds us that the potential to “watch from the bottom” exists through the use of technology, and that this potential expands at an equal rate to that of technologies used to “watch from above”. At the same time, it is important to remember that not every person has equal access to the technologies of counter-surveillance to which Cascio refers. In reference to these technologies, Gary T. Marx (2003) argues that although there is greater equality in access to and use of technologies today, “we are certainly far from equivalence here. The kind of technologies that are

¹⁰⁹ Cascio points to several instances such as Abu Graib and the 2005 Republican Convention in New York City in which everyday citizens made use of such devices to record injustice and watch the watchers. He also notes that “By 2003, camera phones outsold non-phone based digital cameras. Over the last couple of years, the quality of the cameras built into the phones has increased dramatically... It's possible to take a snapshot with a cameraphone and send it off in email or post it to a web page with a push of a button or two. Thousands of so-called "moblog" sites have sprung up, dedicated to cameraphone shots of whatever captures the photographer's eye at that moment. And increasingly, cameraphones can do more than just take still images. A growing number of cameraphones can record -- and send -- video clips. With so-called 3G networks, bandwidth is sufficient to send live webcam-style video from a mobile phone” (Cascio, WorldChanging.com).

developed, apart from who has them, is also much affected by inequality of resources” (384).

It is safe to say that, even if Baldwin students had as equal access to technology as their wealthier peers, these technologies would not help them record what is happening inside their schools, given the effective ban on such technology.

Could writing, however, ever be banned?

To this end, we come to a less obvious, but no less profound conclusion about the role that writing and the after-school poetry club performs in the lives of these students. In settings of pervasive and unjust surveillance, writing may be one of the last remaining ways to record and resist what is happening inside schools today as a result of citywide surveillance policy. Consider the ways in which the following students characterized writing:

I think as a writer you like to observe... I think writing is watching something that is watching you. It's fine, you're looking at me and I am going to make sure I write down what you're doing or I'm going to have people listening to what you're doing... I think that's what you're doing [by writing] -- capturing a moment and giving a moment to other people... You're capturing it, you're taking that picture. (28, Elizabeth Acevedo Interview)

I'm very observant... When you're writing not everybody has background knowledge of what you're talking about, so you wanna give details—and little details to prove that you were actually there. Like if you talk about how you came into a room, but if you added detail like I came into the room and almost slipped on a skateboard, just that little detail right there, it proves that you were really there (32, Lloyd Sykes Interview).

[Writing] puts things in your mind, if you write about them. You're perceiving and judging, maybe it's even wrong. Maybe it's not even true but it's a way, it's your own surveillance (44, Jason Julien Interview).

I think it allows for them [writers] to become watchers just cuz you can take notes on how folks interact either with one another or with you. Or just how you interact with the world around you. (7, K~Swift Interview).

Observation as a writer is critical and observation also makes you aware cuz you would see things that somebody normally wouldn't (12, Raphael Paredes Interview).

In each of the statements above we hear about the importance of good observation as being a critical component of good writing. By being good observers, they are being good writers (and vice versa). A good example of this can be seen in Senica Lopez's piece of new journalism that she wrote as part of an Urban Word NYC journalism workshop. Senica is a Baldwin student and a very talented writer. In this piece, she weaves together her investigative prowess and her anger at the school security agents (SSA) student:

Scan This!¹¹⁰

I was afraid to talk to him. He was obviously someone of great authority. He wore a white button down shirt instead of the boring blue dawned by the other guards. One morning I planned to approach him for an interview. After squeezing my way into the crowded scanning room, I saw him in a corner, surveying the room. We made eye contact. I immediately looked away. As I made my way through the cumbersome scanners we continued replaying this awkward scene of my looking at him, his returning my gaze, and my not being bold enough to maintain eye contact with him.

The following day I saw him outside the entrance watching us students like a hawk. I mustered up all my courage and approached him. I began, "Excuse me Sir, I'm taking a journalism class and..."

He wasn't even looking at me. This man of such high authority - his badge, the only glistening object on a cloudy day, was looking over me. And he continued to look over and past me until I said the word "interview" which is when he finally looked at me.

He asked me to repeat what I had just finished telling him. I did. He agreed. We met two hours later to talk.

At precisely five minutes to ten I met him in the interrogation room

¹¹⁰ The story was written by Senica Lopez in the New Skool Journalism Workshop at Urban Word NYC. It was published in *The Brooklyn Rail* newspaper Fall 2006.

next to where we get scanned every morning. He was there with two lower ranking, blue-shirted officials. I found out the basics first, like his name (Wilson Baez) and his job title (supervisor of all school safety agents at Baldwin High School). I learned that all school safety agents, better known as security guards, in [Baldwin] were “under the umbrella of the NYPD 52nd Precinct.”

Baez wasn't very talkative. He gave simple discouraging answers and didn't seem interested in being there. When he found out that my topic was on the inconsistency of scanning, he was quick to tell me that I didn't have much of a topic considering scanning was up to chance. “Some agents are better trained than others and have a better eye when it comes to what to look for,” he told me.

After finding out that the journalism class I was taking wasn't in [Baldwin], he became just a bit more tight-lipped and asked for my ID card, quickly jotting down my name.

I later asked Baez if he had any statistics regarding the amount of violence in [Baldwin] High School since scanners were put in in September 2005.

“Well there is no violence now that there are scanners,” Baez declared.

“So there's been no fights in the school?” I inquired.

He replied, “Well of course there are some fights, but not nearly as much or as bad as when there were no scanners.”

I refrained from mentioning the fact that after the scanners were put in, during one of the hundreds of fights I've seen since then, one student stabbed another student with a screwdriver. I wonder how that got in?

Senica's piece shows how writing can be an excuse for collecting information. It also reveals the trickery at play between students and school security. Director, playwright, and founder of The Wooster Group, Elizabeth LeCompte, noted in a recent interview that in order to gauge the strength of the play she is working on and the audience's response to it, she sits among the audience incognito. She does this for every performance. On the one hand, she claimed, this tactic afforded her an opportunity to get firsthand accounts of how every aspect of her play was working with the audience. But it also allowed her, she claims, to “hide from being watched by watching” (10/8/07, *New Yorker*). We can see how students like Senica use their writing to hide from being

watched (“I was afraid to talk to him.”), while closely observing *and recording* details about their subject. In this sense, writing may even give students the courage they need to stand up against injustice.

Conclusion

While the initial student walkout may have ‘failed’ to generate the kind of change students were hoping for, it is possible that the Baldwin poetry club and its poems themselves have offered students (and teacher-allies) a rehearsal for what may become the next public display of protest – one that may offer a more sustainable vision for change. Scott contends that while *infrapolitics* might be thought of as elementary they are the building blocks without which “more elaborate institutionalized political action” could not exist (201). As building blocks towards future change, student writing must be understood as a space of resistance; one in which they may take refuge from their ongoing battles with security guards or other authority, with severe over-crowding and an increase in fights in the hallways. Students can use such clubs and their own writing to vent, commiserate, joke around, and buffer themselves from difficult experiences in school. They may also use the poem to talk back to authority and perceived injustices.

In order to understand the complexity of the ‘hidden transcript’ – its ever-shifting, cloaked double-meanings, Scott looks closely at the organizational ‘*infrapolitics*’ of subordinated groups – as do Tricia Rose and Robin Kelley, in their documentation of bottom up practices of resistance taken by African American youth. Rose claims, for instance, that rap music is a hidden transcript; that it is “a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless” (1995, 101). Kelley (1994)

argues that historians studying African American history have neglected to uncover the hidden resistance and ‘infrapolitics’ of subcultural groups and have, instead, focused too narrowly on the high profile acts of resistance such as bus boycotts or the freedom riders. The activities and practices of the hidden transcript, by way of contrast, take place off stage, under the nose of those in power. For this reason, they are not always easy to observe, sometimes cloaked in apparent conformity. James Scott argues that there is an important dialectic between the hidden transcript and practical resistance – “it would be more accurate,” Scott continues, “to think of the hidden transcript as a condition of practical resistance rather than a substitute for it” (p. 191). The significance of the student poetry and the weekly poetry club meetings may lie with the combination of hidden transcripts and infrapolitics which offer students a rehearsal for – an implicit getting ready for -- more overt direct protest of the school’s policies. As Raphael put it:

once you start believing, that’s when stuff starts happening at least that’s how I see it. If you don’t have hope in something, it’s not going to raise up and hit you. It’s not going to do anything for you. My motive would be to... just keep telling him, keep writing. Eventually you’ll become stronger and the stronger you become, the more attention you’ll bring and more attention you bring, the better you will feel (12, Interview).

One of the best ways of locating hidden transcripts and the ‘infrapolitics’ within them is by locating spaces that exist ‘off-stage’ and are “actively sealed off from surveillance” (121). Scott defines these spaces as “social sites” and suggests that they are achievements of resistance and struggle. They are not easily won, nor are they easily defended. I think we can begin to see the multiple ways in which youth writing, as the examples included in this chapter point to, function as both ‘hidden transcripts’ and ‘social sites.’ Indeed,

had I stopped my inquiry with the protest or my observations of tactical avoidance, and overlooked the hidden transcripts that were taking place “off-stage” – actively sealed off from surveillance (121) - I would have missed some of the richest ways students were choosing to respond to the school’s newfound policies.

While the poem cannot eradicate those often painful experiences resulting from school surveillance, the act of writing -- whether in a poetry club, an after-school organization, or a poem – can put youth in vital dialogue with a wider audience, when they are ready to accept recognition. In this sense, student poems and raps help them to tactically locate and identify multiple audiences – whether this audience is comprised of those who refuse to listen, or those who receive their voices, impacting their educational lives in the process.

Finally, without recourse to the sophisticated technologies that might be used to watch and record the watchers, my research evidences the fact of students using what they have to positive effect: their pens and notebooks. In this way, writing about and cataloguing the injustices that go hand in hand with surveillance can work as a vital form of ‘sousveillance’ – a display of active resistance that is actively sealed off from authority, whether this is their schools, the security apparatus of the public sphere, or their own peers.

When they finally choose to perform their poems, they remove this seal. They muster the courage to share their experiences, observations, concerns, and even their visions of change.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of security measures focused on urban youth, across a bewildering swathe of private and institutional spaces, is cause for grave concern. As I worked with youth in New York City, I came to realize that my intervention in this problem was occurring from a new, if not idiosyncratic vantage point. This view is unique because surveillance studies too rarely focuses on *how* it feels to be watched—particularly from the vantage point of youth of color. Rather than focus solely on the structural implications of citywide surveillance measures, which, as I have argued, are largely focused on youth of color, I found myself choosing to analyze and frame the embodied story of how these measures impact these youth. My concern for the impact of surveillance practice and policy on the bodies and minds of urban students was central to my research. The structural forces at play are complicated, and demand rigorous attention by researchers and scholars, but so too are those individuated responses to these forces. It was the latter that most intrigued and excited me as I streamlined my research.

What I found in the ways in which students were responding was both inspiring and saddening. As I aimed to illustrate in chapters two and three, surveillance in schools does not necessarily prevent violence, and has been known to increase violence, negatively impact a school's culture and its reputation, and contribute to the loss of good teachers and good students. At the same time, the daily exposure to metal detectors, scanners, cameras, high levels of police and security presence, and pervasive watching does condition and socialize youth to feeling consistently watched, to distrust, hide, and avoid authority. This exposure to such systems of surveillance also seems to cause

students to be less inclined to speak out or organize in response to issues that bother them, and be more apathetic in general. While several of the students in my study did take part in the student-organized walkout, many did not, and in their words we rarely hear any urgency about the need to take part in political protests. For this reason, I chose to locate the emphasis of their resistance in terms of the more individuated, everyday forms of protest.

In this way, my study is an extension of the work of scholars like Jean Anyon (2005), who argues in *Radical Possibilities* that a new social movement is needed in order to address those systemic issues (poverty, joblessness, and racial and class segregation, to name only a few) that affect schools, but cannot be addressed by administration and its faculty alone. And yet, though it is true that wide scale social movements would almost certainly help to bring about a more equitable, democratic, and just society, the personal work of administrations and faculties is needed to provide immediate help to students caught in the surveillance net. Such work can assist students in finding ways to recognize and foster their highly personalized acts of resistance. Mr. Greer is a good example of a teacher who did this with his students. Alternately, *Sistas and Brothas United* offers a vital example of an outside organization working to help students and schools overturn some of the policies imposed on them. My study, in many ways, celebrates these interstitial individuals and organizations. At the same time, it recognizes that the kind of overhaul needed to address the problem of surveillance in schools will not come without massive, organized policy change. In these ways, my

research represents a possible hybrid method for considering social activism and the individualized resistance of writing.¹¹¹

While striving towards policy changes, some of my theoretical methods may offer insight into alternate critical approaches to analyzing, framing, and synthesizing what is happening in other urban schools. In the following pages, I want to outline several of the methods I used to unpack, analyze, and problematize the concepts of surveillance and security, resistance, and writing. I believe they will afford practical and theoretical advantages for future scholarly work inside urban schools. Throughout, I will speculate on questions that remain for future research. Finally, I will briefly outline a few policy recommendations.

Personalized forms of resistance

Taking a cue from De Certeau's method of valuing close attention to the specific, located subjects I followed the actions and words of my youth participants very closely. What emerged from this method was a range of personalized forms of resistance. These forms ranged from the inconspicuous (tactics of avoidance) to the more discernable (poetry club). Uncovering these forms required ongoing, close scrutiny of my research subjects. This included paying attention to the way they crossed the street and how they passed through metal detectors in the morning, to how they sat in their desks during class or poetry club. It also included taking note of the ways in which they spoke and wrote about the painful topics I had begun noticing. Their responses were at once specific to

¹¹¹ Social activism tends to fit the performance of writing; not the process of writing. Therefore it often gets overlooked as a form of resistance.

each individual and also indicative of a communal story about the implications of surveillance in the lives of youth. Although I am not suggesting that my research uncovered a collective phenomenon that can be observed in every urban high school, I am suggesting that close observation of students and their actions lends itself to uncovering homologous forms of resistance and opportunities for change that might otherwise fall outside our purview. In oppressive and depressive settings, it is often hard for the scholar to avoid becoming consumed with what is not working – and researchers often do a noble job outlining these issues. However, close observation may offer alternate portals for identifying what forms of student resistance are working (if only momentarily) as survival strategies. I argue that those adults working on the ground need to know what they can do to be part of what is working for students, since so many of them want to be part of the solution, not the problem. Close observation, attention to nuance, and a sense of the phenomenology and paradoxes of student experience are the best, most available tools for such adults. Without close observation, I would not only have failed to detect the multiple sources of surveillance with which youth contend in school (and on a daily basis), but also in their communities and their everyday interactions in the public sphere. The phenomenology of surveillance helps offer a disciplinary lens for shedding light on the holism of student experience. It also indicates just how badly schools have failed to differentiate themselves from the culture of the streets and commerce, and, in turn, how they are coming to emulate big business.¹¹²

¹¹² We witness this in Mayor Bloomberg's takeover of New York City's Department of Education as well as in the contracts with surveillance and security companies, etc.

Youth in urban schools must contend with multiple jeopardy.¹¹³ Taking note of the conflicting and contradictory valence of power in student life made it impossible for me to oversimplify the relationship between their experience and the long arm of the youth security apparatus. If subsequent researchers are to uncover the complexity of what is occurring in urban schools, they would do well to find methods and concepts that help us grapple with the complex dynamics inaugurated by multiple sources of power. In uncovering these dynamics, however, researchers must expect to be disheartened with what and how many vectors of power affect youth in urban schools.

Institutionally speaking, Baldwin represents a striking example of a good school spiraling in a downward direction. Its loss of effective teachers and good students, and the inevitable gap that continues to expand between high-achieving students and their lower-tracked peers is indicative, I believe, of where large high schools in New York City are headed. In addition to several other issues specific to schools (standardization, overcrowdedness, fiscal inequity, problematic pedagogy), the New York City Department of Education's security and surveillance initiatives contribute to this downward spiral. While we cannot expect poetry clubs and our students' nuanced forms of resistance to overturn the effects of these problems, scholars can argue for schools to be given room to breathe and institutional space to excel. Teachers like Mr. Greer show that this is possible not only in his classroom, but after school, in his commitment to staying an extra hour after school to monitor the poetry club. What might schools gain if they encouraged and rewarded teachers and organizations for working with their students in such positive

¹¹³ In Chapter four I define multiple jeopardy as the cumulative experience of surveillance – one that is felt in the public sphere (neighborhood, store, subways, etc.). From within the school, multiple jeopardy refers to how students recognize and contend with multiple gazes and humiliations (peers, security, teachers).

ways? What might students from different schools gain by learning of what their peers are enjoying and accomplishing in other schools? Finally, how might educators and activists play a role in bridging inspired and informal protests or personalized forms of resistance from one school to the next? As I write, important organizations like NYCoRE (New York Collective of Radical Educators) are helping to focus teachers' attention on personalized forms of resistance within their own classrooms. Similarly, organizations such as Urban Youth Collective (which includes such organizations as Make the Road by Walking, Brotherhood Sister Sol, and Sistas and Brothas United), whose emphasis is on working directly with youth, are finding ways to support students from within their various schools, and trying to work closely with teachers across schools.

Identifying self-selecting groups

The students I ended up working with fell into what I call a “middle-range.” Although chapters one and two illustrate the ways in which surveillance and security policies target the most vulnerable students, my study suggests that every student gets caught in the net. I discovered this primarily by deciding to work with a self-selecting group of writers. By doing so, I learned of the ways in which middle-range students are impacted by such measures and come to understand the ways in which top-down policies impact many more students than those they were originally intended to target. For future research, it would be interesting to consider the impact of surveillance on other self-selecting groups, such as the school's sports teams, or drama club. What might these students tell us about the intricate and subtle ways in which security efforts impact a

school and its culture? What might we learn about forms of resistance, and how these forms are influenced by a student's position within a school and its security protocol? We might learn, for instance, that students on sports teams learn to navigate the school's security protocol by making use of special privileges they have or building relationships with school aids.¹¹⁴ Further, we might begin to distinguish between positive and negative (or less positive) forms of resistance. Because my study was focused on one group it could not make these distinctions, but they are important in helping guide us towards fostering more collective, organized political resistance.

Future questions also remain in the interstices between the urban, suburban, and the rural. Though my study was focused on one urban high school in New York City, it is clear that similar questions can be raised for suburban and rural schools, which are also on the receiving end of sophisticated surveillance efforts. What might we learn about resistance to these efforts from students in these schools? Does technology play a markedly greater role in helping to shield students from being constantly watched? What might we learn in terms of the implementation of surveillance and security policy (at the local, state, and federal levels) by comparing urban and suburban high schools of the same size and diversity? Does the surveillance net work in similar ways in a suburban district, or does security in a suburban school do a better job of locating and disabling its perceived threats?

Institutions and everyday life

¹¹⁴ This was something that many of the students indicated to me was occurring at Baldwin, but I did not pursue it.

Chapters one and two helped underscore the relationship between schools, policies, and the business of surveillance. Exploring the goings-on of a large urban high school is mesmerizing and exciting to a new researcher. There are many roads to follow inside a school – and these roads lead to other institutions that influence the culture and policies of a school. In the case of my research on surveillance, the trail led to the Mayor’s office, the Department of Education and post-9/11 anti-terrorist legislation, to the media and its portrayal of urban school safety and the big business of anti-terrorism technology. These are incredibly important paths to follow, but I could not wander away from those concentrated sites where they all converge on youth culture.

While I tried to follow these paths, it was important for me to remain committed to the students and to their embodied experiences of the institution itself. The everyday life of students is an invaluable and complex source of information for what is happening inside schools. What might institutions gain if they turned to students to help inform their thinking regarding policy? Similarly, what might students tell scholars about the need to change the internal culture of a school once surveillance measures are imposed? How can concerned educators and activists work more effectively with students who are understandably nervous about taking part in political action on school premises? Such questions emerge and will persist well past the horizon of this study.

Surveillance studies

One of the important successes of surveillance scholarship is that it has come to mark the normalizing effect of increased monitoring and suspicion on one’s subjectivity.

In this sense, daily encounters with metal detectors at a school's entrance are not only repressive, they also help to produce the person under watch (Butler, 1997; Vaz and Bruno, 2003). This concern for the impact of surveillance practice and policy on the bodies and minds of urban students was central to my research. As other scholars continue to witness a surge in the deployment of surveillance strategies in schools across the country, more work is needed to uncover the various ways this deployment comes to take shape and the roles that policy and privilege play in how and where it is unleashed.

For instance, in chapter three, I explore the differences between surveillance and security at Baldwin and Darwin. What accounts for these differences? How are certain schools able to 'escape' citywide policy initiatives? The concept of 'sousveillance' may offer a unique tool for researchers interested in these issues, particularly as they are situated inside schools. Sousveillance offers researchers a way to think about how those with minimal access to power and authority are cataloguing and recording injustice in their lives. It also offers researchers a method for working *with* research participants. For concerned educators and activists, these details can also help identify problems and generate new strategies for more organized responses to administrators and policymakers.

My study has consistently emphasized the potential importance of writing in the lives of youth, and featured writing as an example of sousveillance. It exceeded the scope of the dissertation to focus solely on the process of writing and its relationship to social activism. In what ways can writing play a more powerful role in response to greater surveillance? Can it do more than record the details and assuage some of the pain that youth experience as a consequence of their everyday experiences, or is that enough? In

what ways might activists and educators draw upon the power of writing and performance to help intervene against injustice? Further, what else might writing uncover about new forms of surveillance that emerge in school contexts?

These are important questions, and they exceed the limits of this initial study.

Policy Recommendations

My study has aimed to show that surveillance and security policies in urban schools are not working, and bring with them a varied set of subsequent problems. As explored in chapter two, I elaborated upon several assumptions underlying our desire to institute surveillance measures in schools. Namely, that urban high schools are inherently violent; that security and surveillance improve safety; and that these technologies and policies need not be evaluated in order to be considered effective. If they want to understand these effects, policymakers, police officials, and those involved in making recommendations towards school security need first to spend time inside large urban high schools in order to understand the dynamics at play inside these spaces.

My study suggests that over-crowding and the demands that these high schools place on students who have been removed from other high schools (something the newer small schools do not have to contend with) are issues that significantly impact school safety. Furthermore, instances of violence that occur in and around school settings need to be appropriately and effectively addressed. Though it is understandable for institutions to want to keep these instances quiet, the public and the school is ill-served by myths and rumors that haunt and survive these events.

For instance, it is still unclear what exactly occurred to instigate the Baldwin metal detectors. Though there were several instances that occurred outside of the school, none of them involved Baldwin students. Of these purported instances of robbery that occurred inside the school, I could find no corroborating evidence of these and teachers and students had differing versions of what had occurred. My sense is that school administrators do everything they can to cover-up and keep quiet about random acts of violence and safety precisely because they do not want Department of Education officials to get involved and demand certain measures be taken. This is perhaps understandable, but it also contributes to a confusing lack of transparency. Instead, DOE officials should be more willing to work with principals and help identify preventative solutions that fit within the school's culture before introducing metal detectors and police. Plenty of research testifies to the fact that the most effective violence prevention measures are those that are student-focused and allow for students to play a role in school safety. As one of my research participants remarked, students are not taught how to resolve conflicts when they come up; it is not surprising that fights tend to occur.

By opening the door for private companies to get more and more involved in public education, schools are becoming the receptacle of surveillance technologies that were not created with schools—let alone the complex worlds of adolescent students—in mind. From metal detectors and scanners to biometric fingerprinting machines and mounted cameras, schools are becoming the test ground for these technologies.

Columbine offers a haunting example of a school which was well-equipped with surveillance cameras that proved useless in preventing or responding to the tragedy.

Surveillance policy needs to bear in mind the location in which it is being implemented if it is at all to be effective, and not cause unwanted and irresponsible problems. Often without the consultation of those within schools, local politicians (city councils, school boards) have initiated expensive and multi-year contracts with surveillance companies that unfortunately indebted them to expensive and often times ineffectual technologies for the long-term. With no recourse to alternative solutions, school administrators are sometimes forced to implement these technologies in their schools. In turn, technologies are often implemented with no measures in place to evaluate their effectiveness over time.

If the turn towards privatization intensifies—as I suspect it will—school reformers need to offer alternative solutions for preventing violence and crime in order to combat the easy one-size-fits-all solution of surveillance technology. On the other side of the bargain, if surveillance companies want to work with schools, they need to begin to take their educational clients’ needs just as seriously as they take the needs of their military and commercial customers. These packages must come with an ongoing, rigorous, and outside evaluation of their effectiveness.

More narrowly, my recommendations are focused largely on school administrators. Much is happening inside classrooms that works to de-pressurize the stress that has accompanied Baldwin’s metal detectors and heightened security. These efforts remain ‘under the radar’. But they are extremely important for the safety and security of students and teachers. It is absolutely imperative that principals identify and

support teachers who are able and willing to use their classrooms for places where students can vent and express their rage. Instead, more often, these teachers are not encouraged and, in Mr. Greer's case, find little incentive to stay. Incentives might include extra funding that goes towards sponsoring student clubs; merit pay for teachers who are able to harness their students' frustration in positive ways; funding that would bring in outside organizations to help teachers and administrators effectively process and deal with the effects of over-crowding and heightened security. If funding is not available, a school must find ways to be more accessible and responsive to outside organizations who are concerned with the ways students are being treated. These are often the only sites that value youth voice – and know how to listen carefully. These organizations have the ability to help bridge administrators, teachers, and students across schools – and can help make important recommendations to policymakers and activists.

Finally, we must celebrate the work of those heroic high school teachers who remain particularly sensitive to their equally heroic students' concerns about the culture of their schools. Such teachers rarely misrecognize student resistance as a disruptive force, rather than a potentially powerful and proactive one. And when their students galvanize around an issue that is important to them, these teachers encourage and support them with responsive pedagogy inside the classroom, offering room for them to gather and express themselves outside the classroom.

They open the door to a kind of light, one that no camera can adequately catch.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Qualitative Research

I was very fortunate to be living, working, and studying in New York City at a time when surveillance and security policymaking was being ramped up. Equally important was the occurrence of the Baldwin student-organized walkout. From the very beginning, I felt I had a lot to draw upon locally and wanted to utilize my existing relationships with urban youth of color, with teachers, with schools, and with colleagues to forward my research goals. As Joseph A. Maxwell points out, one of main strengths of qualitative research is its ability to elucidate local processes, meanings, and contextual influences in particular settings (90). At the same time, I needed to strike a balance between relying on what I felt I *already* knew and seeking new and important knowledge. This tension required that I make use of a range of qualitative methods and strategies of inquiry that I detail in the following sections.

As described in my Introduction, I conducted a qualitative research study utilizing ethnographic methods with a purposeful sampling of approximately twenty boys and girls of color between the ages of 15 and 23, from across New York City. These youth were chosen to reflect the dominant make up of New York City's lower and middle-tier high schools, and were also from two distinct sites. Half were students involved with Urban Word NYC (UW)¹¹⁵ and half were students at Baldwin High School. The youth from UW, many of whom attend or attended public high schools with their own versions of surveillance protocol, offered input that complemented my research on Baldwin students.

¹¹⁵ Urban Word NYC is an after-school poetry, spoken word, and hip hop organization that provides New York City teenagers free after-school workshops, all-youth open mic spaces, and an annual teen poetry slam. It was founded in 1999.

Taken together, these students' testimonials help to reveal the parallels between surveillance of youth in school spaces and private stores, public parks, subways, and particular neighborhoods.

In *Working Method*, Fine and Weis (2004) encourage researchers to approach educational research with a 'compositional' framework to be "multiply positioned: grounded, engaged, reflective, well-versed in scholarly discourse, knowledgeable as to external circumstances, and able to move between theory and life 'on the ground'" (xxi). My design utilized methods including eight months of participant and site observation, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with seventeen participants, focus group interviews; some shadowing¹¹⁶; fieldnotes and textual data collection; and theoretical analysis throughout. Over the course of several months, I worked in different capacities with each participant – meeting them in their school, conducting lengthy one-on-one interviews, going with them on small outings, and maintaining a researcher/student relationship with them throughout. In addition to collecting quantitative data, doing ethnographic observation, interviewing teachers and youth organizers and advocates, and reading a range of literature related to this topic, I found student writing to be a crucial source of data. One of the marking features of my design was that I chose to work with youth who were also writers. For this reason, my data includes the writing of my participants. Their writing is an important lens through which they process their experiences with surveillance, and an important strategy of resistance. Similar to the ways in which "theories offer another language, a language of distance, or irony, and of imagination"

¹¹⁶ Shadowing involved hanging out with students in their neighborhoods and communities; being with them as they went about their regular activities. My shadowing consisted of shopping with them; hanging out with them and their friends; and attending poetry events/shows with them.

(63, Ball), poetry offers youth an alternate language -- an outlet for being heard and a method for analyzing experience. In my design, student poetry functions both as data and as forms of resistance to be analyzed.

Positionality

As an administrator, educator, activist, and advocate, I worked with New York City youth of color between the ages of 13 and 19 for over seven years. Since arriving in New York City and becoming connected to its educational system, I have been largely influenced by working directly with this demographic and in the communities in which I conducted research (The Bronx). As I developed my research design, I drew upon my years of experience as an educator working predominately with teenagers of color in New York City. Being in their extra-curricular lives gave me an advantage because it alerted me to the ways in which they experienced the city's increasing surveillance. While I have been engaged in these struggles and worked closely with these youth, I am an outsider and cannot pretend to be otherwise. As a white, middle-class woman who grew up in Los Angeles, learning New York City and its population of youth has been part of my journey, and being an outsider allowed me to ask a lot of questions and listen. When I began to set out to do research, I came to see how my own experiences with being watched (or not being watched) were directly impacting my desire to do this project. However, I had absolutely no sense of the real experience of being watched as a teenager with dark skin. Nor would I ever. I cannot experience what it is to walk into a store and be followed down the aisle or, worse, be asked to leave. Nor can I relive my high school experience and replace it with that of my research participants. Although these types of

experiences were told to me throughout my career as an educator working with youth, the best I could do was to take what I was hearing seriously. For that reason, my choice to work with a purposeful sampling of youth of color who were middle-range students and writers, felt like the right choice because I needed to rely heavily on their ability to express and articulate the experiences they were having. As I learned from and listened to them, I was recording my own personal reactions in a journal (memos) and it was often the case that I would note an instance of feeling watched and record it. The difference between me and my research participants became obvious: while I was noticing *instances* of being surveilled; they were living it day to day all day long. With this in mind, I tried to develop both a descriptive and theoretical social analysis of what I was hearing and seeing throughout my research process. As well, I used my own self-reflection and continuous personal writing to remain as self-reflexive as possible. In many instances, I spoke openly with my research participants about the privileges associated with being white and female (one of my interview questions directly pertained to this), and this helped to develop ongoing dialogue between me and my research participants so that this topic was often discussed.

Choosing Sites and Building Relationships

In the following sections, I will elaborate on how I came upon my research site, and how I went about gathering research participants. As briefly discussed in my introduction, the ‘a ha!’ moment which determined my choice of research topics came to me in a large, urban high school in Manhattan. I had conducted some informal research there for in one of my first graduate classes taught by Setha Low. As well, I had worked

in and out of that school as the Director of Urban Word NYC (they hired us to conduct poetry workshops and work with teachers on-site during school hours). It was a very convenient place for me to consider conducting research – I had professional access; knew many of the teachers; was familiar with the building and its rules; knew the administrators and social workers and many of the students. It seemed like an obvious choice. However, as I began to design my research, I began to question whether it made sense for me to conduct research in a setting that was so familiar. I came to realize that my biases specific to this school were too deeply entrenched to do a good job of conducting fair research on this site.

At this stage, I considered working solely with youth and not to locate my research at any one school, but to follow students into the schools they attended. I would gain access to these youth through Urban Word – specifically through one of its after-school workshops. As part of this decision, I chose to co-teach a year-long journalism workshop that afforded me regular and consistent contact with these youth. This workshop began October 2005 and ran through June 2006. Several of the students in this workshop were fundamental to helping inform me about my research topic. For instance, although they each attended different high schools, we had long focus group sessions on the varying degrees of security in each high school they attended. It was fascinating to see and hear the differences among them, and to observe how they were responding to each other's different level of security. Observing this sensitized me to the unfortunate juxtaposition of Baldwin and Darwin high schools. Outside of the workshop, I interviewed many of its participants as part of my research. In addition to these

participants, I reached out beyond the workshop to other members of Urban Word who I thought might have keen insight into the topic I was researching. These youth also helped inform my understanding of the topic and they became a good point of balance to what I was hearing from Baldwin students.

In September 2005, the Baldwin walkout happened and I was alerted to this by several people and the *New York Times* article on it. Although I was unfamiliar with the high school itself, I began asking around about anyone who knew a student or teacher at the school. One of the adult mentors at Urban Word had done work up there and was receiving emails from Elizabeth Perez asking for help starting a poetry and hip hop club. When I began to ask around about Elizabeth Perez, it turned out that she had just been invited to join Urban Word's Youth Board. Through Elizabeth, I gained access to her peer group of writers at Baldwin, and to the club itself. Although I made several attempts to meet with and talk to the principal, these went unacknowledged.

Through Elizabeth, I was put in touch by email with Kevin Greer. After contacting Mr. Greer directly, I began conducting research at Baldwin in January 2006. My time at the school was generally in the after-school hours with the club; however I spent many mornings on site at the school to witness students entering through the metal detectors, and, as a guest, I was allowed to accompany Mr. Greer and Mr. Pultinas throughout their day. I did this often. As my research at the school progressed, and through a snowballing method, I came to learn of other key individuals with whom to informally speak (deans, parent coordinators, other teachers). Although I spoke to them, I felt that it was important for me to stay close to the club and its members. On a similar

note, my status as an outsider conducting research ‘under the radar’ at this school helped enhance, for me, the pervasive feeling of being watched as I wandered the hallways, sat inside classrooms, and cleared the metal detectors. I came to understand the inconsistency of security, and the ongoing fear associated with security.

In short, I had access to three different sets of youth: those from the Journalism workshop; those from Urban Word; and those from Baldwin. Members from the first two sets of youth attended, or had attended, different high schools around the city. Although I chose to focus primarily on the experiences of those at Baldwin, having access to these three sets of youth allowed me to triangulate and validate what I was hearing from one youth to another. When I heard something occurring at Baldwin, I was able to go to the other group of teens and ask if it had occurred at their high school, for instance. Also, I was able to draw together the very important link between in-school and out-of-school experiences with surveillance, and the total lived experience of feeling watched.

As my research with students at Baldwin, and youth members of Urban Word progressed, I became aware that my study contained some aspects of what Marcus (1998) calls multi-sited research. Although it was not formally designed as such, this approach recognizes the relationship between the site of inquiry (a high school and an after-school organization) and other “sites” which might include the streets, home, stores, etc. Multi-sited research allows the researcher to link the micro-level (everyday interactions), the mezzo-level (institutional policies and practices), and the macro-level (structural forces and dominant cultural themes) (Marcus, 1998). Although I was particularly interested in their school experiences, my participants invited me to follow them beyond the walls of

school. In certain instances, I accompanied students on trips in the marketplace, the subway, and into their neighborhoods. This experience offered me a chance—however individualistic and limited it may have been—to observe the myriad of police surveillance these students confront outside of school.

Participants

Joseph A. Maxwell (2005) suggests that in qualitative research the typical way of selecting settings and individuals is neither probability sampling nor convenience sampling, but what he labels as purposeful selection. “This is a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (88). He goes on to say that there can be four goals for purposeful selection: 1.) achieving representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected (89); 2.) adequately capturing heterogeneity in the population (89); 3.) deliberately examining cases that are critical for the theories that you began the study with; 4.) establishing particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals (90). As was discussed briefly above, I found my research participants through my relationships at Urban Word, and each relationship connected me to another through a kind of snowballing method. Because of the nature of my topic, and my desire to illuminate the marginalized voices of teenagers inside schools, it became very clear at the outset that I wanted a purposeful selection of youth of color. I chose to focus on youth writers. Similarly, from the get go, I was interested not in how school surveillance and zero tolerance policing were impacting the most marginalized students (of course, this matters

greatly to me, but I felt it was being researched already), but rather how these policies were impacting those who fell in the middle-range. As stated in the Introduction, I felt strongly that by learning about how it impacts this population of youth, we may learn more about the overall impact of school surveillance policies. Further, this population may have a better chance at advocating for change. By drawing upon participants from all three sets (Journalism workshop; Urban Word; Baldwin), I was able to achieve representativeness and heterogeneity. Where Baldwin students experienced certain things in their school similarly, I was able to counterpoise these experiences with feedback from youth who had attended high schools in which metal detectors had been in place for several years, or with youth whose schools had yet to install them. Similarly, as pertains to goal three, I was conducting a theoretical social analysis and felt strongly that input from these youth would help inform my theorizing. The nuanced insights and sophisticated analyses that I was hearing from the youth participants had to do, in many ways, with the fact that they could both observe what was happening but were not fully caught up in it (i.e. not in detention for all hours of the day; not tracked into special education classes entirely; not always on the verge of being suspended). In many instances, I would share what I was thinking or reading with them and they would lend critical insights. Finally, although I did not decide to conduct systematic comparisons across schools or across experiences/perceptions, having the three sets of youth to draw from helped me validate and challenge what I was hearing and observing. As well, the juxtaposition of Baldwin and Darwin high schools became a dominant thread through several of my interviews and is featured in chapter three.

The Adults

Although I had informal conversations with several other adults at the school (deans, a few security guards and school aids, and several teachers), I detail below the four main adult participants that are featured in the dissertation.

Soon after I met Elizabeth Perez from Baldwin, I asked her to put me in touch with the teacher-advisor to the poetry club. She gave me the email of Kevin Greer and I began corresponding with him in December and set up a time to come visit the club, introduce myself and my research project, and see if it would work out for me to visit regularly. That evening, I rode the 4 train home with Mr. Greer and gave him a more detailed sense of what my research was about and what it would entail. He agreed to be involved in it and to help put me in touch with people at the school. Although he said he would facilitate an introduction between me and the principal, he suggested that I try to set something up with her directly (these efforts went unacknowledged). Because Mr. Greer was leaving Baldwin at the end of the year and helping to start a small school in Brooklyn, he was very candid with me throughout my research – alerting me to several incidents he thought I might need to know about. He was also very generous about letting me sit in on his classes and introduced me to other teachers. As discussed in chapter five, Mr. Greer was extremely well-liked and respected among students and teachers. This allowed me to use his name to meet and speak with other teachers. Although I spoke regularly with Mr. Greer for over six months (at the club, on email, and on the subway ride home after the club), I did not formally interview him until fall 2006 when I was back in New York for a short visit. His departure from Baldwin was clearly present on

his mind throughout the 2005-2006 school year and I knew that it wasn't the right time to interview him about what I was observing. He seemed very preoccupied. When we finally sat down, we were in his new classroom in Brooklyn and he was very reflective about his last year at Baldwin.

During several of my interviews with students, I began to hear the name of Mr. Ray Pultinas. In spring semester 2006, Ray was on sabbatical finishing his dissertation (Teachers College). I corresponded with him via email, but did not get a chance to meet him until fall 2007 when I attended one of his WITT seminars. I noted the seminar's statement of purpose: "Committed to an activist response to the problems and issues that confront us on a local and global level. Through the power of research, writing, publication and organization, our WITT seminar students seek to inform themselves in order to inform others." In my fieldnotes, I noted that Mr. Pultinas had a rare, confident sense of authority and sat down with his students in the middle of the circle and generated conversation by asking questions. His class took place in a small computer lab and there were about thirteen students present – all of whom were engaged in the topic of war. Mr. Pultinas was a wonderful source for me because of his length of time at the school; he was able to speak directly to the before and after effect of the walkout. We corresponded by email over the course of my research, and conducted a formal interview in fall 2006.

Through several of the students and Mr. Greer, I was put in touch with Milton Roman, the parent coordinator at the schools. Students often referred to Mr. Roman as someone who cared about them and about the school. I spent only a brief time with Mr. Roman but, owing to his role in the school, he alerted me to several issues in the school

including the upsurge in violence since the metal detectors arrived. He also spoke about the hierarchy of decision-making (Region and Chancellor, Principal, Assistant Principals manage Deans and School Aids, NYPD Lt. and Sergeant manage School Security Agents) that made it nearly impossible for him to try to work to make any changes. I could tell that Mr. Roman felt very frustrated with the school, but was sparing of it being the Principal's fault. He intimated several times during our interview that parents had absolutely no idea what was occurring every day in the school. He, like Mr. Greer, was so unhappy with the changes in the school he was planning to leave (however, I do not know the outcome of this).

Once I was alerted to the role that *Sistas and Brothas United* played in the walkout, I contacted the organization directly and was put in touch with the youth organizer, Fernando Carlo. I stopped by the two-story brownstone in which the organization was housed off of Kingsbridge Road in the Bronx and Mr. Carlo was conducting a workshop on organizing with about twenty youth. I told him I would come back the following week which I did. We sat for about two hours and conducted an interview. As well, I maintained contact with Mr. Carlo by phone and email throughout my research process. He was extremely helpful filling in the holes regarding SBU's involvement in the walkout itself (did they help, for instance, organize it, or was it student-organized?), and about the wider efforts to address metal detectors and over-policing in several schools, not just at Baldwin. Because Mr. Carlo had himself attended Kennedy High School, and was working with students from all the surrounding large

Bronx high schools, he had an important perspective on security and surveillance policies in schools.

Through Fernando, I was put in touch with Amy Cohen, the Executive Director of *Urban Youth Collaborative*. Although I was familiar with UYC's work, I did not have any contact with the organization until after my research was completed. I researched their website and located their Safety with Dignity petition, as well as the Students' Bill of Rights that they created. I corresponded with Ms. Cohen through email and in fall 2006 I conducted an hour long interview with her over the phone. She had been involved in these issues for many years and her depth of knowledge surrounding them was extremely helpful in filling out the picture about the history of security and surveillance in New York City public high schools.

The Students

Now that I have addressed how I found my participants, I will elaborate briefly on the participants themselves. In the following descriptions I have tried to strike a balance. I want to give some context for each student who appears in the study, and give some detail about who these individuals are as I came to know them without going on and on. As part of my design, I asked every youth participant that I interviewed to fill out a pre-interview checklist. There they answered several questions (included at end of appendix) and indicated their age (at the time of my research), ethnicity, the borough in which they live, and their school. I draw from this checklist, and of my knowledge of each participant, for the descriptions below. Please note that I list their ethnicity *the way they wrote it* on the checklist. It is important to note that I built strong relationships with each

of these individuals and remain in touch with almost all of them through email. In many instances, I tried to connect youth with outside programs that seemed relevant to their needs; I wrote many of them letters of recommendation for college, and helped some of them with their college essays. While working with them conducting research, I was in their lives also as an advocate and mentor, and tried to do what I could to offer them any support I could. I have listed them alphabetically. One final note is that I came to know and observe several other students through the Poetry Club at Baldwin; unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to conduct one-on-one interviews with everyone. I conducted one all-group focus group that was inclusive of many of these individuals. Although my observations of them make their way into the dissertation, I have not included detailed descriptions of them below.

Elizabeth Acevedo, 18, Latina, Washington Heights, Manhattan, Beacon School.

Elizabeth was a longtime member of Urban Word NYC and also a member of *Brotherhood Sister Sol*, a youth organizing program in upper Manhattan. I had known Liz for several years and was always impressed with her commitment to herself, her education, and her politics. Liz was always a strongly identified Latina woman and was well-known among her peers in the youth spoken word scene as a powerful performer and writer. Her middle-school principal had advocated for her to attend a good high school and had special connections to Beacon. Her grades alone qualified her to get in, but he helped insure that she get there. At Beacon, she was one of the few students of color and spoke often about this. She was also an AP student – making her stand out in

class even more. One of her teachers was very supportive of her poetry and her involvement with UW and came to many of her performances. She was one of the few teachers I saw supporting her students in this way, but that's the kind of place Beacon is. I knew Liz's ability to articulate her experiences as what she referred to as "the model minority student" would be important to know more about, so we met several times to talk about my research on surveillance. She was familiar with school procedures because Beacon was in the midst of getting metal detectors itself. For the most, however, Liz's insights around surveillance were more towards being a woman of color and the experience of being watched by men. She bravely recounted several instances on the train or on city streets where she had been harassed by men. I got the feeling it was a very regular occurrence and one she did everything to avoid. From her, I learned about the interpersonal nature of surveillance and the way in which it can quickly condition us to walk another way and try to avoid it at all costs.

Enmanuel Candelario, 18, Dominican, Washington Heights, Manhattan, Fordham University. Enmanuel was a longtime member of Urban Word NYC and, like Liz Acevedo, also a member of *Brotherhood Sister Sol*. I had also known Enmanuel, or Eman has his friends called him, for many years and was an enthusiastic supporter of him attending Fordham University in the Bronx. Eman was a talented poet and performer and a winning member of the 2004 Teen Poetry Slam team. His poetry often commented on U.S. politics and foreign diplomacy. As part of his work with BroSis, he had traveled to Africa (I think it was Ghana) and worked in a village. Eman was completely transformed

by this trip and his poetry often tried to express the advantages that those in the U.S. had compared to those living in underdeveloped nations. He was one of those rare youth who cared deeply about what was going on beyond our borders. Eman was tall, imposing, and powerful on stage, and yet sweet and unassuming off. In similar ways, he was familiar with encounters with authority and had a keen eye when witnessing this happen to other youth. When I asked him how often he saw this occurring, he said everyday. When I began to talk up my research to several UW members, Eman was one of the few who requested that he be involved. He was in his second year at Fordham and interested in pre-law. He too was concerned about the growing surveillance he was witnessing in his neighborhood and especially along Fordham Road. When I went to meet Enmanual for our interview outside of the student cafe at Fordham, I exited the train at Fordham Road and walked the length of it to the University (about a mile). My fieldnotes record how struck I was by all the signage about video surveillance in the stores and on the street. There was a huge banner that went from one side of the street to the other that read “This Area Under NYPD Video Surveillance”. Nearby was a military recruiting trailer. When I finally got to the campus, I noted the fortress-like gated entrance and the green lawns just beyond. When Eman and I sat down to talk, I asked him about this and he commented that it was hard for him to attend a University that felt so disconnected with the community in which it sat.

Rhina Duquela, 17, Latina, Co-op City, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. I met Rhina through the Poetry Club. She was instantly likeable and very enthusiastic about talking

about my research topic. This had to do, in part, with the fact that she had conducted research on the topic for her English class. On the checklist, in response to the question *What feelings do you associate with these places?*, Rhina responded: “In school, I feel trapped and suffocated, however, I don’t feel watched nor do I believe that there is any surveillance (meaning, cameras). Around my neighborhood, I feel free, yet I feel like I’m being watched and judged by security.” I could turn to Rhina for help gathering ‘facts’ such as the difference between SSA’s and NYPD, or what the proper protocol was for scanning. Rhina was the newest writer in my study; having only begun as a member of the group. At the same time, she was wonderfully open about sharing her writing and reading it aloud to me. When I introduced her to Urban Word, she was incredibly excited about being among other writers, and took part in the second semester’s journalism workshop. I was fortunate to watch Rhina improve as a writer and performer over the course of my research. Rhina was the eldest in her family and was expected to do well in school and to take care of her siblings. She often commented about not being able to go out at night, or attend functions outside of school because her parents wouldn’t let her. When she performed at the Teen Slam at the Nuyorican Poets Café, it was her first time taking the subway to Manhattan by herself. Rhina was also a strong student, though she struggled in several of her classes. She was a Macy student and attended College Now courses at Lehman College one day a week after school.

Christine Feliciano, 17, Hispanic, The Bronx, Christopher Columbus High School.

Christine was a member of the journalism workshop who I recruited as a research

participant. She attended a large Bronx high school that had had metal detectors for five years (ever since she was in the school). In many ways, her experiences reflected someone who was already conditioned to accept metal detectors, police, and constant security harassment as part of her daily school experience. Christine lived with her mom in a mixed Latino and West African neighborhood in the North Bronx. She spoke about walking home from school through a predominantly upper middle class, white section, and feeling uncomfortable, like she didn't belong. Christine was a survivor. In her senior year, she was the only one of her crew of 20 friends to finish high school. She talked about having a transformative moment during her Junior year when she was busted for trying to sneak marijuana into school and getting suspended. From that point on, she decided to change her ways – go to class, try to please the teachers and her mom, and do well in school. Before that, her typical day at school consisted of smoking pot and wandering the hallways with her friends. She was one of the few students who suggested that the added security at the entrance of the school had made the school safer. But she was equally critical of the way security treated students inside the building, in the hallways. She preferred the cops to SSAs. As a member of the workshop, Christine took her writing very seriously, and over the course of our time together, I helped her with a script she had worked on for her drama class. The script was about two seventeen/eighteen year old girls, one of whom was having sex with men for money. They both got caught up wanting fancy things like clothes and jewelry, and got mixed up with the wrong crowd. Christine was really proud of this script and it was performed by members of her drama class. Her teacher had asked her to take out some of the language

and I tried to help her edit some things in time for the performance. Later I asked her if the main character was based on anyone she knew and she told me that it was about her.

Jodi-Ann Gayle, 19, African-American, The Bronx, attended Park West High School, now at College of Technology. Jodi-Ann was a member of the journalism workshop who I recruited for my research. She was fairly new to the organization and therefore shyer than some members, but she took her writing very seriously and was a tough, protective, and astute young woman. We talked at length over the course of several months about her experiences in high school (Park West had metal detectors) and college, as well as her encounters in stores. Jodi-Ann was the first to alert me to the marketplace as a source of significant surveillance directed at youth of color. She very much enjoyed shopping and her style reflected it, but because of her store encounters with security, clerks, and salespeople, this was rarely a pleasant experience. In response to the checklist question *What ways do you make sure you are watched?*, she wrote: “I peep when they think I am not looking and if it’s a camera, I look straight at it.” Although somewhat shy and reserved, Jodi-Ann had a solid stare and remarkable presence. It was often hard to know what she was thinking and she rarely cracked a smile. I met with Jodi-Ann several times over the course of my research and accompanied her on a shopping trip as well.

Jason Anthony Julien, 17, Columbian and Grenadian, Brooklyn, La Salle Academy. Jason was a student in my journalism workshop who I recruited into my research. Raised by a single mom and living in Coney Island, Jason was both street and polished. He wore

a big, fake diamond earring in his ear, and often came to workshop in the sport coat he had to wear at school. As a student at La Salle, Jason seemed to do well, but he commented in his interview with me that it was also one of the roughest schools he'd ever been in because it was all boys. Still, I could tell that Jason thrived there. He seemed to be the kind of student who would do well wherever he was – slightly cocky, good sense of humor, and smart about how to please the teacher. In response to the checklist question *What ways do you avoid being watched?*, he responded: “I don't avoid being watched. If someone wants to stare, let them. They either admire me or hate me. I'll take both.” Jason was also a basketball player – at school and on the courts in Coney Island on the weekends. He seemed to strike a good balance between being good at both school and sports, but it was clear that basketball was a passion (he often wore jerseys around). Jason was a senior at the time of my research and he was trying to get a full ride to Sarah Lawrence College (I wrote a letter on his behalf). When he received word that he got it, he came to the workshop with a huge smile on his face. During our interview, he told me what a surreal experience it had been to visit the campus in the summer program. He was the only youth of color around and he could feel the stares all around him. It was one of his first times being the object of *that* kind of attention and as he retold the story, I could tell it bothered him. But he went onto say that at a certain point in the summer program, students were asked to read or perform their poetry/writing. Jason went up on stage and blew everybody away and all the cold stares turned to admiring ones. This experience seemed very fresh on his mind. He told me that it really bothered him that he had to prove himself to these other students that way, but it was what he was prepared to do if

he had to. He knew he needed to succeed at college because it was his mother's dream and he planned to fulfill it.

David McNeil, 16, African-American, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. David was featured in chapter six and stood out to me from the minute I met him. He was a longtime rapper, a Macy student, and was very smart. In response to my question on the checklist *Noting a difference between being watched and being known, what are some of the spaces in which you feel most known?*, he responded: "I feel most known when I'm inside an actual classroom. There, the teachers see me as an individual, not just another student roaming the halls." Mr. Greer made a point one club meeting to announce that David had scored the highest in the entire school on the English regents. You could tell that he was proud, but you would never hear him brag about how well he did in classes. In fact, David often seemed to play it coy or subtle, and wasn't one to draw too much attention to himself. Yet, he was probably the most talented writer in the club. He would read something aloud and the entire club would sit in awe. I got the sense that almost everyone had a slight crush on David (boys and girls). As an African-American male, he definitely seemed experienced at posturing as a tough guy. During our interview, he commented that he rarely hung out in his neighborhood because that was often when he would get in trouble. Similarly, he said that he never liked to return to his old neighborhood (his single mom moved the family to a new neighborhood in the Bronx after he left middle school) because there was so much gossiping that went on. David was private and respectful, and yet very open with me when we talked about his experiences with surveillance. He

seemed to know exactly what I was talking about and recounted numerous, painful stories about being racially profiled in several settings. Still, he tried to play it tough. David also had a girlfriend, Mary, who was half Black, half Latina and very light-skinned. David was very protective of her and walked her home from school every day. He told me that he and Mary often received stares and that they were both familiar with what it feels like to be categorized and profiled. As I did with several students, I encouraged David to enter the annual Teen Poetry Slam. He made it to the semi-finals. The organizers were so impressed with him that they asked him to perform at the beginning of the Finals at Washington Irving High School to a crowd of over 750 people. I could tell this meant a lot to David, though he tried to play it cool.

Dean Mejia, 21, Hispanic, Queens, attended Newtown High School/now at Temple University. Dean was an early student at Urban Word NYC. I'd known him since 2001 and he was back in New York after graduating from Temple University. Ever since I'd known him, Dean was a fascinating person – extremely self-reflective, protective, and awkward. In the years I'd known him, he'd grown up a lot. Dean was probably one of the most ambitious students I'd ever known. While in high school, he self-published a book entitled *The Poor Man's Guide to Living* in which he recounted all the ways in which someone who didn't have money could get by (one of his examples was by stealing ketchup at McDonald's). Dean had an older brother, a younger sister, and two parents who appeared not to get along well. Dean was protective of his sister Nubia, and often referred to his brother as being mixed up in illegal activity. I often got the sense that he

was always very conscious of trying to fit in – no matter where he was. In response to the checklist question, *What are some places you feel least watched?*, Dean responded: “When I’m at a UW event, everyone is so diverse I don’t stand out. When I’m in my Puerto Rican Philly neighborhood, people just assume I’m P.R.” Although Dean was half Dominican, half Equadorian, Dean suggested to me that he never minded ‘passing’ as long as it helped him fit in. At the same time, his familiarity with passing in so many settings gave him a very keen sense of what that entailed and how it felt. Similarly, his ambitiousness afforded him opportunities like attending college out of state, and working summer jobs to support himself. For this reason, I found his insights incredibly useful and helpful to me. His experience helped me understand the ongoing nature of surveillance, even when/if passing was an option.

Rafael Paredes, 17, Dominican, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. Rafael was the first student I interviewed at Baldwin. We sat after school in a classroom across from Mr. Greer’s and we talked for almost two and half hours. As one of the ‘organizers’ of the walkout, Rafa, as he was often called, had a lot to tell me. Rafa struggled in school, had difficulty getting along with his father at home, and took several months off during the 2005-2006 school year (I kept in touch with him during that time by cell phone). Rafa was not a Macy student and was already behind his credits to graduate – he was basically trying to finish his fifth year of high school. He was also friends with several of the school aids and knew how to hang out in the hallways without getting caught. His issue was that he found his classes boring and often spent time in Mr. Greer’s class. But it was

clear that Rafael was intelligent, perhaps too intelligent for school. He was vocal and helpful as a member of the poetry club; he always had a word of encouragement for his fellow students. He also took his writing very seriously and was working on a novel the last I spoke with him. I turned him on to the fiction writer, Junot Diaz, whose books he came to love. When it came to the subject of surveillance, Rafael provided me with a framework for thinking about the difference between observation and surveillance. His interview is filled with metaphors and ways of thinking about the topic at hand. He had a way with language. In response to the checklist question *What ways do you make sure you are watched?*, he wrote: “Eye contact. I can sometimes find SSA and staff eye my every move. We connect through our eyes. It’s like ‘I’m watching you’.”

Elizabeth Perez, 17, Dominican, Washington Heights, Manhattan, Baldwin High School. Elizabeth is featured in the dissertation because of her role as the founder of *Spoken Ink*. She was also central to my gaining access to Baldwin and to several individuals within the school. As a Macy student, Elizabeth was very focused on school and on getting to college. She was smart, excitable, focused, hard working, and organized. Her energy was infectious, at least to me, and so was her anger. She seemed capable of galvanizing a room of people to do anything and it was always thrilling to watch her lead the club. She was passionate about everything she did – from reading books to performing poetry to being with her friends. Elizabeth was the youngest of three girls and the last to head off to college. Her poetry was often about strong women, and she told me that her dad was not a strong force in the family, but that it was a family of

women. She lived in Washington Heights and knew her neighborhood really well. At some point, I gave her a copy of *Random Family* by Adrian Nicole LeBlanc which is set around Grand Concourse, The Bronx, and she told me that she recognized so much of the book because that was “her community, her people”. Elizabeth was the only student from the Baldwin students I ultimately worked with who was also a member of Urban Word prior to meeting me. Not only was she a member, she was on the Youth Board. That tells you about Elizabeth. She emerges quickly within any setting as a leader. Liz was also a member of *Girls Write Now* and attended their workshops every Saturday. When I met her in the fall 2005, she was a Junior and already focused on college. She said she had to be because her parents couldn’t afford for her to go anywhere unless she got a full scholarship. She ended up getting just that to Pomona College in California. This summer, Brave New Voices, the National Teen Poetry Slam was held in San Jose, California, and Liz had made the Altoona, Pennsylvania team through her affiliation with Girls Write Now. I went down to see the Semi-Finals and Liz came running out from nowhere to hug me when I got there. That was Elizabeth – she seemed to bring passion to everything she did and scoop you up in it.

Esteban Ramos, 16, Latino, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. I encountered Esteban when he showed up in the poetry club to speak on behalf of *Sistas and Brothas United* along with Jessica Sosa. I could tell he was shy, yet committed to several of the issues and he was intrigued by the writers in the room. Still, he never returned to the poetry club. I did not come in contact again with Esteban until the summer 2006 when I went to

meet Fernando Carlo at SBU. Esteban just happened to be hanging out. At that point, I decided to conduct a joint interview with both of them, and Esteban was especially insightful about how students were feeling soon after the walkout. Whereas Jessica expressed a kind of raw anger about how things turned out, he was much more speculative about things. Also, Esteban was one of the few Baldwin students who was not a writer so his perspective on the role of writing and the link between writing and activism was extremely pertinent and helpful. After the interview, we maintained contact by email.

Anthony ‘K~Swift’ Scott, 21, African-American, Lower Eastside, Manhattan, out of high school/not in college. Of all the participants, I have known K~Swift the longest. He joined Urban Word in 1999 and has been a member ever since. His roles with the organization included: student, staff member, youth mentor/teacher. Over several years, I have come to know Swift, as I call him, and his mom and younger brother quite well. An amazing writer and rapper, K~Swift is incredibly smart and articulate and politicized. He is also very conscious about his race and gender. On several occasions, I have traveled across the country with Swift. We have spoken at conferences together, co-taught workshops together, and I have chaperoned him and his peers on trips to the National Teen Poetry Slam. In this way, I have been with him when he has experienced overt racism (being ignored at the counter, etc.), and he has often commented on these incidents directly to me. When I asked him *How do you understand being watched as a black male?*, he responded: “I expect it. More than being watched, being potentially

profiled. You know, I think profiling is even more pervasive than watching cuz someone doesn't have to watch you to say 'oh, that's one of that' and put you into whatever section" (4, Interview). K~Swift grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn, but was also raised on several military bases including one in Texas and another in Germany. In third grade, Swift tested high and his mother got him plugged into Prep for Prep – a college preparatory program that seeks to get low-income youth of color into college prep high schools. Swift attended a predominantly white private high school, and did well there, but did not stay past his first year at SUNY Stonybrook. He often spoke about his experiences in both settings, and was extremely articulate about being a person of color in a largely white setting. There is a quiet worldliness about K~Swift and other youth gravitate to him. He's an excellent teacher of writing, and is well-regarded in the hip hop scene as a really talented, and positive rapper. Not interested in mainstream hip hop (that which is played on the radio), K~Swift has been in a hip hop band for over five years (New Rap Order) and frequently performs around the city and beyond. His style of rap is generally positive and 'conscious' and political – and deals explicitly with issues of race, the war in Iraq, gang warfare, and inner city crime, etc. For all these reasons, it seemed incredibly important that I sit down with K~Swift early on and test out my interview questions with him. This was incredibly useful. As my research with other participants grew, I often checked in with Swift to see if his experiences related to others in the study.

Jessica Sosa, 17, Dominican, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. I interviewed Jessica in the summer 2006, after she'd graduated from Baldwin and was headed to Union College

on a HEOP scholarship in upstate New York. Jessica was the only senior among my participants and is also featured in the dissertation because she was one of the organizers of the walkout and a devoted and key member of *Sistas and Brothas United*. I was able to learn a lot about both from her, and she helped fill in the gaps on my details of the walkout itself. She was one of the few people, for instance, who went upstairs and spoke to the Region Superintendent on the day of the walkout. Jessica was very spirited and open and I couldn't help but like her. We sat for over two hours talking about her experiences at Baldwin, and because she was on her way to college, she was more capable of reflecting on her high school experience. Although I had talked to Jessica while she was at Baldwin, soon after she came into the poetry club to get the students to fill out petition postcards, I did not have the same kind of access to her as I did the others. She and I spoke by phone a few times and then met for the interview. Also a Macy student, Jessica was very focused on getting to college, and was very studious and saavy and very committed to getting a good college education but then returning home to her community to make it better.

Anthony 'Dred' Stafford, 16, African-American, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. A familiar face around school among students and staff (he 'pounded' security as he passed), Anthony was also one of the organizers of the walkout, although he seemed to stay in the background. A lanky and humorous student struggling in his classes, Anthony was well-liked, chatty, popular, and intelligent. He often wore a beat up sports coat with pens and pencils sticking out of the front pocket. But it would be a mistake to imagine

Dred as a ‘nerd’. He was also struggling to stay in school and, at 16, had had a few run-ins with the law. When I asked him about feeling watched in his community, he spoke at length about being profiled and frequently confronted by police. For this reason, he knew how, when, and where to spot an undercover cop better than most. The following is a typical response by Anthony: *“You could tell, like at the train station, easy. Because they’re just standing around. They just sit there. In the car, they usually got a Ford or an Impala. Any time an Impala drives up the block, everybody leaves. And it’s a dark color car with tinted windows. Whatever. They only drive Impalas or Fords or if they got a truck, they got a Ford Explorer. Other than that, when they’re on the street, they got a sweater that comes below waist length because they got to cover up their weapons. And they almost always guaranteed to have a New York hat. Like a Yankees or NYPD”*(focus group). Anthony was a prolific writer and kept a small (3x5) notebook in his pants pocket, and pulled it out regularly to read aloud a piece or to write down an important thought. His forte was rapping, but he was equally good at lyrical or love poems. Of all the members of *Spoken Ink*, I found Anthony’s work to be what I liked hearing aloud the most. Dred was also one of the students who started the petition and the walkout and was a member of a few after school clubs – and was often making announcements in the poetry club. Unfortunately, his presence in the club was somewhat sporadic because he had mandatory regents tutoring at the exact same time as *Spoken Ink*. Sometimes he would leave tutoring to go to the bathroom and come to poetry club and forget to go back because he was so involved in sharing his work.

Lloyd ‘Lolo’ Sykes, 16, Puerto Rican and Black, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. Lolo was a vocal and engaging member of *Spoken Ink* and I gravitated to him early. He was outspoken, thoughtful, generous, and smart. Also a Macy student, Lolo lived in the very South Bronx and it took him over an hour to get to school in the morning, taking the train and two buses. He transferred to Baldwin from a much smaller high school in Brooklyn when his father decided to move back to the Bronx from Brooklyn. Lolo had no relationship with his mother and that was the subject of many of his poems. I got to know Lolo well over the course of six months. He sporadically participated in Urban Word activities, and ventured down to Manhattan to meet with me and talk. We often walked around Union Square and he pointed out all the stores he had trouble shopping in. Unlike several of the Bronx youth, Lolo liked being in Manhattan and enjoyed any excuse to come down. Lolo was busy; he worked after-school at Washington Mutual bank, and did his best to maintain his grades and participate in poetry club. He was not an athlete and resented the privileges that came with being on Baldwin’s football and baseball teams. His passion was writing and fashion. He described himself as having a really strong fashion sense (“a unique style”) and, it was true, Lolo’s sneakers often matched whatever ensemble he chose that morning. Lolo was the subject of the article I did for the *Brooklyn Rail* (brooklynrail.org/2006-07/local/bait-and-switch#bio) and to prepare for that, he and I had several meetings to discuss his concerns about the cell phone ban and the metal detectors. As well, he reviewed the article before it went to print and gave me helpful feedback. If I had any remaining questions or confusions about things after my research

was completed, I was able to go to Lolo for insight and clarification. He was a helpful, kind, and extremely open participant in my research.

Ben Torres, 17, Puerto Rican and Irish, The Bronx, Baldwin High School. Ben is featured in chapter six and was one of the first Baldwin students I interviewed. We met in the library and talked quietly. He was a Macy student and appeared to do well in school. In response to the question *Noting the difference between being watched and being known, what are some of the spaces in which you feel most known?*, Ben wrote: “I feel most known in classrooms. Classrooms are places where teachers know me, not just watch me.” Ben was a quiet and dedicated presence in the poetry club. He showed up every week ready to write. He was close friends with Lolo and John, but equally amiable with each member of the club. He had a good sense of humor and his poetry often reflected a sarcastic, questioning, concerned frustration. Unlike several of my participants, Ben did not participate in the walkout because “being a senior, I didn’t want to get suspended”, but observed it closely. He was extremely upset with the confiscation of cell phones and cd players – a situation that happened to him in the first few weeks of school. Other than in the poetry club, I observed Ben around school and found that, in fact, his writing was where he felt most comfortable expressing himself. For that reason, I asked him to send me all the poems he had typed up. I got to know him through his writing most.

Tyrone West, 19, Black, Brooklyn, attended Automotive High School/now at Kingsborough Community College. I had known Tyrone for several years as a longtime member of Urban Word. In his first few years with the organization, he said little, but as the months and years progressed, he opened up more and became an extremely familiar face around the organization and among his peers. His writing also improved. Having dropped out of high school to earn his G.E.D., Tyrone credited his writing with helping him get the highest score on the English portion of the test. In response to the question *Noting the difference between being watched and being known, what are some of the spaces in which you feel most known?*, Tyrone wrote: “At UW, I’m like a veteran because I was here for four years. At Church because my family is the biggest in there. We have a family member in every department and at home because I’m the older child and I’m out of high school.” At Automotive, Tyrone had encountered security and surveillance and felt that the school’s safety had improved because of it. At the same time, his experience in high school was less than ideal and he dropped out at the end of his Junior year to attend Job Corps and earn his G.E.D. I came to see Tyrone as an invaluable member of UW because he always insisted on telling the truth. If I asked him a question, he always had a concise, thoughtful, and apt reply. He didn’t beat around the bush. Tyrone was also a critical thinker, thoughtful and kind, and supportive of his peers. I also knew that he would understand the significance of feeling watched across several settings. On certain occasions, Tyrone would show up at poetry events dressed in a full purple suit – from head to toe – including a hat and shoes that matched. In these instances, I saw the bravery with which he drew attention to himself. However, on other

occasions, I saw Tyrone fold into himself (not an easy task for a very large young man) and remain quiet and reserved. His play with performance and with being noticed seemed important, and throughout the course of my research and our several conversations, I learned a great deal about what it was to be a Black teenager from Brooklyn who insisted on traveling beyond the borders of his neighborhood.

Data Collection: Interviews, observations, fieldnotes, and student writing

As a researcher, I sought to use multiple methods that would allow me to interact with my participants and enable me to be sensitive to my participants and flexible in response to the data I was uncovering. As well, analysis was part of my design. Although not crafted formally as a participatory action research project (PAR), I drew significantly from the central themes of PAR methods. As noted by Torre and Fine (2005), PAR projects “typically center around issues of structural violence that intimately impact the lives of young people” (271), and recognizes that “marginalized/oppressed youth carry sharp critique” of the structural oppression they experience (272). With this in mind, I drew from PAR’s basic premise that “valid knowledge is produced only in collaboration and in action” (271). My data is informed significantly by working *with* youth participants. In addition to my formal interviews, open-ended observations, fieldnotes and photographic images, and other textual data, their contributions as writers and thinkers resulted in my decision to collect their writing as data. Further, their own writing and performing became a form of action; in this way, I strived to reposition them as researchers in the various settings in which we worked, and not merely as subjects of my research.

Interviews

During my design phase, I worked on and tested out my interview questions (attached document). These were refined with the input of several professors and youth. The goal of these questions was to elucidate what each participant knew that pertained to the subject of surveillance at large, the personal experiences of and feelings associated with being watched, and the ways in which they coped and responded. Throughout my research process, I conducted interviews with each of my research participants. Although these were structured interviews, with a series of specific questions and a checklist that accompanied each interview, I tried to create an informal, unstructured tone for each interview so that I could follow the interviewee where they wanted to go in terms of my line of questioning. For this reason, my interviews generally lasted two hours. In addition to these interviews, I held three focus groups – one with each set of participants (Journalism workshop, Urban Word, and Baldwin). All interviews were recorded, listened to frequently, and transcribed. After I listened to the interview, I recorded themes and patterns, sometimes images and metaphors, that stood out. If I found a detail that needed corroborating, I followed up with that individual the next time I saw him or her. Sometimes, I posed questions to them via email or phone in order to insure that I had understood what they had said. As my interviews began to accumulate, I started to develop codes. I assessed and re-assessed these codes throughout my research. Over the course of writing my dissertation, I listened to each interview again, re-read the transcripts and developed new sub-codes that ultimately helped shape the structure of the last three chapters.

Observations (participants/events)

In terms of participant observation, I visited Baldwin high school at least once a week from January – June 2006. I spent most of my time at the poetry club in room 306 after school on Tuesdays, but I always arrived about an hour early so that I could attend a class, wander the hallways, observe dismissal protocol (inside and outside), and familiarize myself with the space. In addition to these regular visits, I often scheduled other times to come meet with students or teachers, came once a month to observe the morning procedure whereby students entered the building, and was in or around the school semi-regularly for the course of my research (I was teaching at Lehman College, less than a mile away, which made it convenient to visit).

In wandering the halls, I made sure to find every way possible to get to and from different locations in the school. I visited the bathrooms, auditoriums, lunchroom, library, stairwells, basement, etc. As I wandered, I noticed the interactions between students and school aids and took fieldnotes when it was possible. It was especially important for me to observe the hallways between classes, so I came to the school in the middle of the day as well (usually to sit in Mr. Greer's English class) and stood outside the classroom during period change. On every occasion that I visited the school, I did my best to linger around the metal detectors and scanners so that I could observe students and security interacting.

In addition to observing the schooling rituals, I was fortunate to sit in with the poetry club and to attend any outside events at which they were performing (several of the UW slams). In these instances, I sat with the group, but as far from the center of

activity as possible. Being in the club was a great opportunity to take notes, to get to know students informally, and to eavesdrop on their everyday conversations. Since it was the end of the school day, they usually came in with a few good stories of what occurred during the day as they waited to assemble for club. During the club's meetings, I half-participated, half-observed and always stayed for the entire length of the club and accompanied the participants out of the class, down the hallways, down the stairwells, and outside to the subway at the end of the day. Some of the best moments for me to observe students together happened at these times. As noted elsewhere, when I arranged to meet students for interviews, I often tried to arrange them outside of school and to accompany them to sites/spaces that were convenient and 'safe' for them. I often tagged along with them and their friends to wherever they might be headed so that I could observe them outside of the structured interview and in the public arena.

My observation of non-Baldwin students was also revealing. I met with many of them weekly as part of the journalism workshop (October 2005-June 2006). As part of this workshop, we met at Urban Word NYC on West 27th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. In addition, I met students at various locales (their schools and colleges) when we had scheduled interviews. With a few, I shadowed them shopping or traveling by subway to and from a particular spot to wherever they had to go. As part of the workshop, my interactions with them were varied. On one hand, I was their writing teacher, helping them to develop stories to be published in *The Brooklyn Rail* newspaper at the end of the semester. What was nice about this arrangement was that I could get to know these youth entirely outside of the school setting and my role functioned more as

that of mentor. Since I co-taught the workshop I was able to use some of the workshops as chances to talk and write specifically about the topic of surveillance and the feelings associated with being watched. As well, we studied and analyzed reportage related to citywide surveillance and school policies, as well as that of the Baldwin walkout, and this brought about some interesting and useful discussions that related to their own encounters with school security procedures. It was always interesting to learn about how they were reading and interpreting these newspaper accounts. Outside of the workshop, I tried to create a very separate dynamic between me and them – one of researcher and they of participant so that I could establish a slightly more formal interview context. This seemed to work out. When I turned on the recording device, every student I spoke with seemed to get more serious.

My observations over the course of my research provided me with lengthy fieldnotes, memos, notes from conversations, and journal entries. Because I wanted to utilize narrative inquiry as a strategy, I tried to record as many small details, descriptions, and images as possible.

Fieldnotes

I took both descriptive (portraits, reconstruction of dialogue, description of physical setting, accounts of events, activities) and reflective notes (personal thoughts, speculations, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions) throughout the course of my research. On several occasions I used the train ride up to Baldwin to re-read my notes and listen to interviews so that I could use my time at the school to locate any missing information or details. On the ride home, I often used the time to freewrite about my

observations. These freewrites included both descriptive and reflective notes; they were also the space in which I felt the least inhibited to note my hunches and concerns. Since I was conducting research in the context of two writing spaces (poetry club and workshop), I often joined the students in whatever writing prompt they were responding to. I found that I could never fully leave my research hat out the door and just write. I noted that almost every time I wrote while conducting research, it was with the eyes and ears of an observer. These notes became useful to me as I went back through and pieced missing details together.

Student writing

From the beginning of my project, I was interested in student writing as a source of data. I was drawn to Laurel Richardson's (1994) point that writing is a method of inquiry. For her "qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading" (517). As a researcher, she advocates the use of writing to document and analyze observations in the field and argues that "experience is thus open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests rather than objective truth" (518). For this reason, I spent a lot of time writing about my research; typing up my initial hunches and conclusions; reading and refining my perceptions and struggles; crafting short vignettes about what I saw happening; and getting feedback wherever possible. But more importantly was my desire to seek out student writing and collect it as sources of data. In the journalism workshop, for instance, I led students through several free-writes around the topic of surveillance and collected their writing as data. On other occasions, I worked with students to brainstorm around metaphors or analogies I was working with (spotlight,

fishing net, etc.) and see what they added to these. What gets included in the dissertation are only a few of the poems that I collected from students, but in general, I found all of the writing I was hearing and reading to be an absolutely valuable way for me to validate what I was observing and critically analyzing, and an important method for my participants to express what they were experiencing and feeling. Richardson attests: “Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose. Poetry’s rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliterations, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme, and off-rhyme engage the listener’s body, even when the mind resists and denies it” (522).

By drawing upon these four sources of data, while keeping in mind my broader theoretical concerns, I was able to triangulate and validate some of my initial conclusions as I went along. If I found a particular pattern or theme emerging, like the difference between observation and surveillance, I was sure to use my time with participants to clarify this theme. As I got towards the end of my data collection and went over everything, I noticed that I needed certain facts filled in about the history of Baldwin or the walkout itself. I was able to use my relationships with my participants to lead me to people who could fill in the holes.

Strategies of Inquiry

I have already addressed how my dissertation utilized a range of qualitative methods. These methods were invaluable to me as a way of working with my research participants, and observing the nature of and motivations behind their resistances. Here I will attempt to discuss some of my strategies of inquiry. In his book *Research and*

Design, John Cresswell (2003) states that qualitative research aims to offer a broad panoramic view of school surveillance rather than micro-analyses. He indicates that the more complex and encompassing the narrative, the better. He recommends that qualitative researchers choose from among five strategies of inquiry, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory (182-183). Because my study aimed to be both theoretically broad and descriptive of local events and processes that were happening on the ground, I drew from several strategies including narrative, ethnographic, case study (the walkout and poetry club), and what I am calling theoretical social analysis. I elaborate on this last strategy below.

Theoretical social analysis and the use of theory

As I began thinking about my research topic, I began to see that I was considering multiple topics. On one hand, I wanted to consider the impact of surveillance on urban youth in a city like New York. On the other hand, I wanted to observe student resistance to ongoing and pervasive surveillance. And, on the third hand, I wanted to work with writers and to consider the role that writing played as a particular response to increasing surveillance. In order to tackle all three, I read across a range of academic disciplines. This reading helped inform the way I was thinking about the link between surveillance and resistance. It would not be enough, I surmised, to document the oppressive regime of security and surveillance practices being implemented in schools without paying equal attention to on-the-ground resistance, however inchoate that resistance may appear. I made a calculated decision early on, after having read a fair amount of surveillance scholarship, that I wanted to attempt to shift the site of inquiry so that I was focused on

students, not institutions. Even though surveillance and social control scholarship is growing and is generally motivated by issues related to equity, fairness, and justice, very little of it attempts to unearth how these issues are experienced by real people. Not only does my research seek to shift the site of surveillance inquiry from the school to the student, it also focuses on *the responses* undertaken by those whom surveillance targets.

In order to do this and to bring all three topics together, I relied on what I am calling theoretical social analysis as a strategy to weave together theory, my data, and my analysis. Jean Anyon (forthcoming) argues that “critical social theory can be a powerful tool with which to make links between educational ‘inside’ and ‘outside,’ between past, present, and future, and between research design and larger social meanings” (page # forthcoming). She argues, in essence, for social research that grapples with and utilizes theory to help us plan and design our research so that it “connects the ways in which social actors and conditions inside of school buildings, districts, and legislative offices are shaped and changed by what happens outside the classrooms, offices, and official chambers they inhabit” (page # forthcoming). Weis and Fine (2004) refer to this as a process of “oscillation” in which the “webbed relations of history, the political economy and everyday lives” emerge (xvii).

It became clear that in order to talk about student resistance, I had to help frame the topic of surveillance based on how I was coming to understand it through multiple sources. The first two chapters of the dissertation attempt to do this, and draw from a range of sources. The surveillance and social control theory that I chose to read accumulated quickly and was an entirely new body of literature for me. For this reason, it

was always hard to know whether I was reading what was essential, and where to cut off. This list included: Bentham (1995, writings of), Foucault (1979), Deleuze (1987, 1990), Marx (2003), Lyon (2003), Staples (1997, 2000), O'Harrow (2006), Parenti (2003), Cascio (2006), Rosen (2005), Monahan (2007), Devine (1998). In addition to these authors, I also tried to connect surveillance theory I was reading with social control theory such as that of Wacquant (1998, 2002) and Garland (2001). I realized also that there was a lot being written about surveillance in newspapers, on blogs, and in white papers produced by policy think tanks. As I was conducting my research with students, I was also collecting current news and reports on what was happening around this issue specifically in schools. I collected numerous news articles from 1989-present about surveillance technologies in schools, and about school shootings that precipitated these technologies. During the course of my research, several reports came out on topics related to my research (NYCLU, NESRI, Drum Major Institute, Justice Policy Institute, etc.). I also followed closely the local news reporting on citywide and school policymaking. I encountered a good number of articles reporting on student interactions with law enforcement. Together, these materials helped me gain a solid grasp on the subject of surveillance in the academic arena, and also as it played out in terms of local and national policymaking, and how it was being implemented in schools.

I had more familiarity with the concept of resistance when I began my project, and felt that I had a certain level of understanding by virtue of my direct service work with youth. This knowledge was one of the prevailing motives for my choice of topic. At the same time, I had done very little academic reading on the subject and began doing so

as I was designing my research study. I read several Birmingham School theorists including Hall (1997), Hebdige (1979), Willis (1981) and Fiske (1989), and also read Aronowitz and Giroux (2007), Brotherton (2004, 2008), Conquergood (2000, 2002), Rose (1995), Kelley (1994), Butler (1990, 1993, 1997, 2004), Scott (1985, 1990), Munoz (1999), and De Certeau (1984), among several others. What I did not find, other than in Scott's work, was any on-the-ground recording of instances of resistance in relation to the condition surveillance. This seemed an area in which I could contribute since I was hearing so much from my youth participants about their feelings and experiences with daily scrutiny. Little of the theory on resistance spoke of examples that might better be understood as misrecognized, punished, or underappreciated forms of resistance, and yet I felt that, given the context, this was exactly what I was witnessing. For this reason, I had to draw together theory, my data, and my analysis in order to draw some conclusions that felt new. At the same time, I was also sure to read the criticism of resistance theory by Ortner (2006), Brown (2000), and Hollander and Einwohner (2004). Their cautions were helpful in attempting to pay close attention to the signs of resistance I was observing on the ground. Although I had to theorize these efforts, I tried to allow my research participants a chance to speak to what I was observing.

Finally, as a teacher and student of writing and literacy, I was probably the most familiar with the literature on writing, but I encountered little if any that signaled writing as a mode of youth resistance. To that end, I turned to poets Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Adrienne Rich. I re-read and familiarized myself with theorists Morrell (2004), Fisher (2004), Dyson (2003), Elbow (1998), McCormick (2004), Greene (2000), Freire

(1987), and Perl (1980, 1995). Though these theorists helped inform my decision to make youth writing a central feature of my research, however I knew that I was not crafting a dissertation around the bridge between in-school and out-of-school writing. Nor was I attempting to explicate or closely analyze each students' work. I wanted to contribute to these theorists' work that insisted on the importance of writing in the lives of young people. Moreover, I was interested in how writing functioned in the lives of my research participants as a space of safety and dignity. As well, I came to understand youth writing as a response to being heavily watched that creates a necessary distance to watch others and to critique school policy. My interviews with youth reflect a strong desire on each of their parts to speak about their identity as writers. Since we so rarely hear about writing from the perspective of youth, I wanted to give their words and interpretations of the role that writing played in their lives center stage.

Interpretation and Analysis

Because qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive (Cresswell, 2003), my job involved analyzing data for themes or categories, and making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meanings. Though I did my best to be well-informed on a variety of fronts, my interpretations are ultimately filtered through my own personal lens situated at a particular sociopolitical and historical moment. I tried my best to be self-reflexive throughout my research and to log a series of memos about how I was feeling and experiencing the research process. These memos helped me remain honest and critical about the topic at hand – and in some ways allowed me to release any built up frustration and irritation that I gathered along the way. At the same time, these memos

also helped me move deeper into understanding the data, portraying the data, and interpreting the data in relation to my larger theoretical questions. These memos were often typed up and read by members of my committee, or my dissertation writing group, and served as points of interest that I discussed with friends, colleagues, advisors, and participants throughout the research phase.

It is important to note that from the very beginning, my analysis was ongoing and emergent, and I tried to validate what I was hearing and observing along the way. I did not wait to collect all my data before making interpretations and drawing some conclusions. I tried my best to not get stuck in any one way of thinking and returned frequently to my data, and to the insights of my advisors and writing groups. When it came time to start the writing for the dissertation, I took the time to organize (and re-organize) all of my data and prepare it so that I could look at it together. This meant that I typed up my notes from the theory and organized them into binders, that my transcriptions were done, that my memos, fieldnotes, and images were collected and sorted, and that the media articles, policy briefs, and white papers were together. Once I had a general sense of what I had, I began to take notes and write sections based on themes I saw emerging. Many of these initial sections were shown to members of my committee and to my dissertation writing group. With the help of their feedback, I could gauge where and when I was headed down the wrong path. I often went back to the data, re-assessed where I stood in terms of my conclusions, and continued to use writing as my main strategy of inquiry – working to draw together theory, my data, and my own analysis. Often times this writing was clunky, over-stated, and not easy to read, but it was

essential to my process. Soon, I developed an outline for the entire dissertation which helped give me an overall structure and trajectory for where I need to go.

Finally, I began to get more specific with regards to my coding. Although I had several large codes from the outset (surveillance, resistance, writing), I realized that I needed to break each of these into smaller sub-codes. To do this, I re-read each of my interviews and developed a series of smaller codes. They included: Fit the description, Locating the threat, Protest, Recognition, Resistance to watching, Technology, and Writing. Once I had these codes, I tried to discern the relationships they had to each other and several of these codes show up as sections in the dissertation. For the final two chapters, I returned again to the coded data and developed a series of smaller codes or categories. They include: Forms of resistance, History of the poetry club, Sousveillance, Voice, Why writing matters, Writing about surveillance, Writing as resistance.

Throughout the coding process, I sought to bring together my interviews, observations, fieldnotes and photos, and student writing. In addition, I drew from particular theories to help illuminate some of the significant themes in the data and worked to bring everything together through my own analysis. As I was studying these codes and subcodes, I was able to triangulate my data across different sources. The length of time that I spent in the field, as well as my ongoing relationships with my participants, gave me a certain confidence about what I was concluding, but wherever I could, I tried to corroborate my findings by inviting the perspectives of others with whom I was sharing my writing. As well, I fact-checked details with other textual data I had about the events and activities to which my participants referred. In my final analysis of writing as

a mode of resistance, I entertained the very real and important possibility that writing just wasn't enough – and included that section in my final chapter. As I continued to write towards the completion of my dissertation, I began to generate more descriptive portraits and thicker descriptions and weave together a qualitative narrative that varied the use of short and long quotes, used the words and writings of my participants, integrated theoretical analysis throughout, and used metaphors and analogies to illuminate important and recurring themes.

Interviewee Checklist and Questions

PRE-INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Name:

Address (include borough):

Age:

High School & current school:

Ethnicity:

- What are some of the places you feel most watched?
- What are some of the mechanisms, or forms, of surveillance that you are most aware of?
- Map out places you spend a lot of time and note where you feel watched and by what/whom? Try to name them.
- What feelings do you associate with these places?
- What ways do you avoid being watched?
- What ways do you make sure you are watched?
- What are some places you feel least watched? Try to name them.
- What feelings do you associate with these places?
- Noting a difference between *being watched* and *being known*, what are some of the spaces in which you feel most known?
- What are some of the characteristics of these spaces?
- How does it feel to be known?
- What are some of the spaces you feel least known?
- Are/were there spots in and around your school where you felt particularly watched? If so, try to write down where?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Being watched/experiences with surveillance:

- How often would you say you've seen teenagers confronted by people in authority (cops?) in or outside your school? (probes: Tell me about a recent time/describe this. Why do you think this happens? How do you think it effects the kid in question?)
 - How do you think urban youth are perceived by people in authority?
 - Does your experience as a youth in new york contradict these messages? How?
 - Tell me a story about a time when you felt watched? (probes: where? how? who and what is doing the watching? What are the ways they are watching?)
 - How does being watched make you feel? (probes: does it depend on who's doing the watching? does it depend on whether there are others watching you? does it depend on whether or not being watched leads to some form of penalty?)
 - Do you think race plays a role in being watched? (probes: how so? what can happen when people are watched in these ways? do you think white kids get watched? explain/talk about? what about gender? does it play a role in being watched? give me an example of this?)
 - how do you think being with me, a white woman, might change being watched or surveilled in certain spaces? explain (probes: which spaces? when? how so)
 - Tell me about a time when you resisted being watched? (how did you do this? why did you decide in this instance to resist being watched? do you think other urban teenagers resist in similar ways? differently?)
 - What are some of the differences in being watched in school and being watched in public places? (probes: how does one impact on the other? how are they different/similar? how do you keep from being watched in certain places?)
-
- Tell me a story about when you wished you had said something in response to being watched, but you didn't (Do you feel that there are any risks in being known for someone like you?)
 - Talk to me about the difference between your inner voice & outer voice? If there times you stay silent in response to being watched, tell me what goes on in your inner voice?
 - Are you all aware of being watched on the internet? (probes: does it matter to you/to others that the internet gets your information? how so? why not? What is there to learn about how teenagers use the internet?)

Being known/experiences taking up space/claiming identity:

- Some of the kids I've talked to make a distinction between being watched and being known. They've talked about being known after the read a poem, for instance, and someone comes up to them and thanks them for writing it. They've talked about being known as a choice, whereas they don't have choice in being watched. But I'm still unsure of the difference, could you help me understand the differences between being known and being watched?
- If being known is somewhat of a positive thing, describe how it's sort of a positive thing for you? (**probes:** Describe some of the ways that you make yourself known? Do you ever make yourself known in one context that's different from another? how do you do this? Describe the changes you make in your behavior from one context to another?)

- Do you see any relationship between writing and being known? Could you describe this?
- Do you think being heard (outer voice) and being known are related? (probes: how? what are the differences? Give an example from your own experience.)

Tactics of resistance/the force of utterances:

- I'm not sure if you were aware of it, but there was a walk-out of De Witt Clinton HS because of metal detectors? Did you hear about this? (probes: how did you hear about it? what do you think about it? Do you think it was effective?)
- Inside De Witt Clinton a group of students formed a poetry club right after the walk out. Tell me what you think is the relationship of writing to surveillance?
- What role does writing play in speaking back to people in power? (probes: do you think it works? how so? how not?)
- In what ways do you think other urban teenagers try to be heard? (probes: circle back to how youth occupy spaces).
- Tell me about a time when you changed an instance in which you felt watched? when you shifted the dynamic somehow and turned the lens on others?
- How do you think youth your age occupy spaces in the subway? (probes: on street corners? in school? does this have anything to do with how they are perceived by those in authority/positions of power? explain.)
- There have been times when youth are confronted by cops, they get angry and they act certain ways. Have you ever witnessed a time like this? (probes: How did they confront the cops? What are some of the ways you've seen youth confront people in authority? When does it work/when does it not? When it doesn't work, why do you think it doesn't?)
- There's this concept of resistance which says that people respond to something is unfair, they respond in a bunch of different ways. How do you respond when you get angry about something? How do other youth you've seen/hang around with? do you talk with your friends about stuff that makes you angry?)
- What does youth "agency" mean in the context of surveillance?
- If writing by teenagers is a response to surveillance, explain how. (probes: is it a private response? a public response?)
- Any last thoughts about all this?

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