

Governance and Comprehensive Community Initiatives:

**A Case Study of the PRYSE Coalition
In Far Rockaway, New York, 2000-2004**

by

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Abstract

GOVERNANCE AND COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVES:
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by

Michelle Ann Ronda

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The US response to urban poverty has shifted from a welfare-state model to market-based solutions – toward governance as arrangement of service partnerships among different federal and local agencies, contractors, philanthropies, community facilities, residents and businesses. Economic, political and fiscal pressures and shifting views of poverty, race, crime, health, and service have seen increased federal adoption of “comprehensive community initiatives” (CCIs). Originally devised by philanthropies, CCIs are cross-sectoral or cross-agency, multi-actor partnerships relying constitutively on social science-crafted, measurable evaluations of strategies and results; modern CCIs adopt an apolitical focus on “best practices” and forego explicit treatment of race, class or gender. One federal inter-agency program started in 1999, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative of the Justice, Education and Health departments, targets school violence and youth health by requiring schools, health facilities, and local law and justice authorities to enter CCI-type coalitions as a condition of grant funding; these partnerships are expected to solicit community participation. The author’s ethnographic case history of an SS/HS-funded CCI in the Rockaway peninsula of Queens, which she served as an evaluator,

finds mixed effects of federal requirements; obstacles in engaging community participation; and difficulties in “leveraging” one-time grant funding into sustainable structures. Roles of police, prosecutors, social workers, educators, mediators, evaluators and community groups are examined, illuminating divides of organizational mission and philosophy, profession, class, race, turf and residency. This gives rise to critiques of national trends in governance; “community” policing and justice; and evaluation politics. Two critical extremes are considered: Does implementation of community governance extend state authority by calling upon a “community” to condition itself, generating “remote-control government,” or do partnership models merely cover for abandonment of public ideals and obligations? Included are a sociology of Rockaway; a quantitative demographic survey of class and racial disparities and resident assessments of neighborhood issues; and findings of focus groups in which “targeted” Rockaway high school youths reflect on the meaning of safety and health in their lives and neighborhoods.

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To my father, Ismael, and my brother, Eddie.

For the two Thelmas.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| ACQC | AIDS Center of Queens County |
| ADA | Assistant District Attorney |
| AECF | Annie E. Casey Foundation |
| AG | Attorney General |
| BoE | (NYC) Board of Education |
| CAASS | Comprehensive Attendance Administration and Security System |
| CAP | Communities Access Program |
| CBO | community-based organization |
| CCI | comprehensive community initiative |
| CCJJD | Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention |
| CDC | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| CMHS | Center for Mental Health Services |
| CMO | Community Mediation Organization |
| CO | community organizing |
| COMPSTAT | Computerized Statistical crime tracking system |
| COPS | Federal Office of Community Oriented Policing Services |
| D.A.R.E. | Drug Abuse Resistance Education |
| DA | District Attorney |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| DoJ | Department of Justice |
| DoL | Department of Labor |
| DYCD | NYC Department of Youth and Community Development |
| FECS | Federated Employment and Guidance Services |
| FOIA | Freedom of Information Act |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| GREAT | Gang Reduction Education and Training |
| HCAP | Healthy Communities Access Projects |
| HCZ | Harlem Children's Zone |
| HHS | Department of Health and Human Services |
| HOPE | Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere |
| HRSA | Health Resources Services Administration |
| HUD | Department of Housing and Urban Development |
| IRB | Institutional Review Board |
| LEA | local education agency |
| LEC | Law Enforcement Coordinator (at US attorneys' offices) |
| LECC | Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee |
| LIRR | Long Island Railroad |
| MPV | (smoking) Marijuana in Public View (violation) |
| NACM | National Association for Community Mediation |
| NCLB | No Child Left Behind |
| NDAs | Neighborhood Development Area programs |
| NYC-DOE | New York City Department of Education |
| NYCHA | New York City Housing Authority |

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| NYCLU | New York Civil Liberties Union |
| NYPD | New York Police Department |
| OASAS | (NYS) Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services |
| OJJDP | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention |
| OMB | (US) Office of Management and Budget |
| OSDFS | Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools |
| PAL | Police Athletic League |
| PART | Program Assessment Rating Tool (of the US Office of Management and Budget) |
| PINS | Person(s) in Need of Supervision |
| PIRC | Parental Information and Resource Center |
| PRYSE | Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education |
| QDA | Queens District Attorney |
| RDRC | Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation |
| RFP | Request for Proposals |
| RHA | Rockaway Health Alliance |
| RTI | Research Triangle Institute |
| SAMHSA | Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration |
| SRO | School Resource Officers |
| SS/HS | Safe Schools/Healthy Students |
| STAR | “Straight Talk About Risks” (QDA program) |
| UFT | United Federation of Teachers |
| USSS | United States Secret Service |

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, we have moved increasingly away from a welfare state model, in which the federal government plays a strong role in providing social services directly to citizens in need, and towards governance that incorporates market-reliant strategies, privatization of services, and an emphasis on having individuals share in the improvement of their circumstances through responsibility, hard work and volunteerism. Government increasingly is conceived not as a provider but as an arranger of services delivered by markets, or by partnerships of non-governmental parties (New Governance Project, n.d.). This “Third Way” of governing does not in principle abandon the liberal political tradition’s concerns for social justice, but purports to develop civil society to carry some of the functions formerly attended to by the welfare state. Community-building policy and governance circles are engaged in a now well-established push for partnerships between local communities, non-profits, government and sometimes philanthropic actors. Among many other phenomena, this development has seen the ascendance of the “comprehensive community initiative” or CCI, the subject of this dissertation, as an increasingly widespread model for cross-sectoral, cross-agency and multi-actor partnerships in delivering social services and developing communities.

Critics of Third Way philosophy tend to see it as an aspect of neoliberalism. David Harvey’s definition here applies: “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (2007, p. 2). Neoliberalism also includes “a perspective on moral virtue: the good and

virtuous person is one who is able to access the relevant markets and function as a competent actor in these markets” (Thorsen and Lie, 2006, p. 15). In this view, individuals are responsible for the consequences of the choices and decisions they freely make, empty of sociological imagination.

Regardless of the name we put to it, we live in a moment when demands are made of most of us to be held personally accountable for our labor and our deeds. In academe, faculty encounter the sweeping governance of audit or accountability; the buzzword is “outcomes assessment.” In public education, teachers are considered accountable to governors, principals, and parents, as well as pupils. People outside the labor force, or at the very low end of it, become accountable not only for the assistance they receive but for involvement in the improvement of their own situation, arguably even when it is not in their own hands to determine.

In this “accountability order,” people working to improve social life also face such demands. The work of non-profits and social service agencies requires sophistication in the ability to translate imagined impact into measurable outcome. It may be that personal power, reputation and political influence can mediate the demand for quantitative documentation; in the search for funding for social programs, however, the numbers up front usually matter most. Measuring outcomes is a strategy that permits an authority, typically those who control funding – in the case study at hand, the federal government disbursing grant funds through a local school district to several partners in a community initiative – to determine if the money they distributed was well-spent; and furthermore to determine if the program in question will be rewarded with more funding, not necessarily by the same entity, but within the same framework. Requiring measured

outcomes not only permits but also compels location of responsibility for social programs squarely on the shoulders of the recipients of material and immaterial capital, and on the people “on the ground” who actually engage in paid work through such mechanisms. In so doing, it socializes everyone involved in such initiatives to the logic of efficiency, primarily through required evaluation and performance measurement.

Thus, although it may rest on moral foundations of social worth, the accountability order is largely cast as apolitical, objective, susceptible to measurement using social science technologies, and able to assign precise individual accountability. Individual accountability, however, is a movable quality that can be shifted among individuals very much depending on the power and the position of authority within social structures that each person possesses, or lacks, to perform that shifting, to accept, reject or assign accountability to others. Attributions of accountability cannot be treated as givens. They invite scrutiny.

These issues came to life for me during my work as an evaluator with PRYSE, the Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education. Pronounced “prize,” the initiative was carried by a coalition of local government agencies, non-profit organizations and community groups organized on the model of the comprehensive community initiative. PRYSE was meant to address school violence and other social problems in the Rockaway peninsula of Queens, one of New York’s most remote, fascinating and in part impoverished group of neighborhoods. PRYSE was funded and in fact came into existence because of a federal program known as Safe Schools/Healthy Students, a joint project of three federal departments designed to efficiently fund local partnerships of schools, law enforcement and mental health services with the goal of addressing school

violence on a community level. After a very brief planning and development phase, PRYSE received one-time funding from SS/HS for three years starting in 2000, with the hope that successful work might enable the initiative to leverage other sources of funding and achieve sustainability over a longer term. PRYSE continued on a no-cost extension for one year after the federal funding ran out, then broke up some months later.

My work with PRYSE was as a professional paid (and paid quite well for a graduate student) to fulfill an essential function of the “accountability order.” I was a member of a team of academics from Baruch College hired to evaluate the extent to which funded partners achieved their goals according to the standards required by the SS/HS grant, beyond simple implementation of their programs, and beyond the agendas and goals of the individual partners involved in the Coalition. In the course of my years spent in the Rockaways mainly with PRYSE, I also performed evaluation or data gathering functions for other initiatives on the CCI model – projects such as HOPE VI, Weed & Seed, and the Healthy Communities Access Projects (HCAP).

One of the sharpest challenges of program evaluation is how to formulate the standards by which a social program, fraught with so many literally incalculable goals, can best be assessed. The difficulty of crafting measurable outcomes contributed to the eventual disappointment of the PRYSE project’s manager with the Evaluation Team’s findings, and perhaps, in part, to the eventual demise of the PRYSE project itself. The difficulty of holding professionals accountable as representatives of federally funded programs produced, both for the evaluators and the PRYSE partner organizations, a variety of other discomfiting positions over the five years of the initiative. Authority within the PRYSE Coalition was not always acknowledged nor clearly shared, although it

was apparent in informal conversation as well as structured interviews that some partners were perceived as more favored than others in the eyes of project management (which not only meant that their organizations earned a larger share of the grant money, but also that their opinions weighed more heavily in public and private meetings). Such findings are not unusual in the new partnership environment of public policy here as well as in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and in the global South (Taylor, 2003). In addition, the role of the PRYSE Evaluation Team was sometimes met with hostility, as we were best situated to publicize information gathered about the participant organizations, their constituents, and the strengths and weaknesses of their programs as we saw them. Occasionally struggles for power, and their unspoken tensions, would arise publicly and transparently during Coalition meetings. One thing I discovered during this time was that while benefits accruing to the various partner organizations and their employees did not always match the impact of their programs on the community, the biblical saying still usually proved true: “Whoever has, more will be given to him.”

Overview

This dissertation explores the Rockaway peninsula as a “target” of federal, state and local governmental, nonprofit and market attention, but particularly as the site of a funding-driven partnership following the CCI model. It should be understood at the outset that this is not a work of evaluation research, although my experiences as a member of the PRYSE Evaluation Team flow into it, and although I employ tools of evaluation research alongside other methodologies. The Final Evaluation Report for the PRYSE Initiative was published more than six years ago (Van Ryzin, Weikart and

Ronda, 2004) and is treated in Chapter 8. My experiences and learned insights as a member of the PRYSE Evaluation Team give rise here to a broader critique of current concepts and practices in evaluation research; of the role of evaluation within social services, community interventions and applied social science; and of the modern-day CCI as a model for change and – de facto, if not always or predominantly in intent – a tool of governance. The Rockaway case study also raises important questions about recent developments in criminal justice, social work and public health. The present work therefore might be described as a critical sociology of trends in governance, one that follows from a closely studied case history and its contexts. (For more on data-gathering and methodologies, see Appendix C.)

In examining how the Rockaway partnership of local governmental agencies and community-based institutions played out in practice, we hone in on how the practice by funding entities of requiring highly specific partnerships serves to determine, and may distort, strategies for goals such as violence reduction or community improvement. We focus on the foundational assumptions of the partners, on conflicting visions of idealized community, and on the ways in which racial, ethnic, gender and class conflicts were obscured and ignored even as such conflicts surfaced during our work. We consider what it means to engage in activities devoted to changing one's own community, to improve the quality of living for people in urban neighborhoods that arguably lack quality, to possess professional knowledge of and knowledge about communities, and to be asked to embody a hope and spirit of change while being held accountable for knowledge and outcomes – and also to be asked to hold other community members accountable.

By “hope” and “spirit of change,” I do not intend a purely idealistic stance; instead we are concerned with the expectations which people in such community initiatives are asked to develop for themselves and others, and the ways in which contemporary governance might elide or displace those expectations. We examine how the tension between governance and ideals of community partnership plays out on the ground, how it affects, shapes, and governs social actors – how it manipulates and demands and encourages and requires particular habits of expression.

“Hope” also matters here to the extent that community volunteers and paid staff seeking local improvements in urban communities are asked to energize, mobilize, rally and influence residents. Both public and private funders have increasingly required specific partnerships as a condition of application. As in the Rockaways case, so too around the nation, we see police, district attorneys, educators, non-profits, libraries, neighborhoods leaders and residents coming together in not always sensible or harmonious alliances (sometimes even pursuing conflicting goals) to seek funding, apply political influence, and/or garner support to shape their urban neighborhoods.

Chapter 1 examines the elements and principles that define CCIs and their strategies as they have developed during more than two decades, and seeks to contextualize these in a long line of approaches to the social problems of poor neighborhoods, and also of approaches to violence and crime. We shall see how the reduction of the traditional welfare state and the move to central government “devolution” created the space within which CCIs were devised by philanthropies and taken up by government. We shall also see how the long-term shift to heavily punitive and “zero tolerance” criminal justice policies, concomitant with the trend to frame youth

violence as a public health problem, gave rise to the concepts and the agenda embodied in the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students program. We shall review the school violence policies and initiatives crafted in the arena of crisis during several high-profile rampage killings by students at schools in the 1990s, and how reaction to these atypical events affected the origins, goals, funding models and requirements of SS/HS and other programs and policies. After a review of the SS/HS program, strategy, and concepts, we turn in the following chapters to its implementation in Rockaway via the PRYSE Coalition, from my vantage point as evaluator, coalition participant and sociologist.

Chapter 2 introduces the Rockaway neighborhoods within which PRYSE intervened. We review the peninsula's geography, history, economic development, demographics and unique place as New York City's most isolated set of communities, and learn of the divides between its neighborhoods and classes – that which is referred to widely as “the two Rockaways.” In drawing a picture of the field within which the case study took place, I present and analyze findings from demographic studies and surveys conducted by the PRYSE Evaluation Team in the years from 2001 to 2003.

With context, history and field thus surveyed, Chapters 3 through 5 turn to PRYSE and present the predominantly ethnographic case-study data.¹ How did the initiative originate? How was it defined in its original proposal for SS/HS funding? What was its structure, including funding mechanisms? Who were the partner organizations, and what roles did they play in the initiative? How did PRYSE interact

¹ The story of PRYSE in Chapters 3 to 6 features a “cast of thousands” and many key events, meetings and committees. Several reference tools have been provided for the reader: The second section of Chapter 3, called “The Partners in PRYSE,” provides briefs on the many funded and unfunded organizations joined in the PRYSE Coalition. Appendix A presents a condensed timeline of key events involving PRYSE and SS/HS. Appendix B is a listing with biographical details on the key people involved in PRYSE, sorted by partner organization. Figure 2.8 (at the end of Chapter 2) is a full-page census-block map of the Rockaway peninsula (showing “Percent Non-White” residents) with an overlay of neighborhood names.

with the community, and what were its interventions on behalf of school safety and healthy students? How did community realities, funding, agendas, relative powers and authorities, and internal disputes govern the interactions of the partner organizations and their individual representatives – and of the community residents who took part in PRYSE programs and initiatives? Chapter 3 focuses in part on the difficult relationship between PRYSE and the local school district, which served as the fiscal agent for the entire initiative, and the difficulties this posed to all of the initiative’s activities.

As the structure of the Coalition came together in 2000, the Evaluation Team agreed on a division of labor. I was assigned to attend meetings of the PRYSE Steering Committee, the executive body, and I also attended the Community and School Safety committee, one of the Coalition’s several bodies aiming (but not necessarily succeeding) to coordinate programs. As a result I assumed responsibility for evaluating the activities of the PRYSE partners who were most active in the school safety committee: the police department, the district attorney, and a non-profit mediation services organization specializing in justice diversion or “alternatives to incarceration.” Chapter 4 examines the roles of these three organizations within the Coalition, and touches upon how these relate to their roles more generally as actors in the peninsula’s neighborhoods and in their dealings with Rockaway youth.

Through my attendance at Steering Committee meetings and other PRYSE functions, and through many evaluation sessions as well as interviews with Coalition partners, I witnessed the development and ultimately the failure of PRYSE to find a sustainable model (funded or otherwise) after the SS/HS grant period ended. Chapter 5 comprises a chronological series of vignettes about PRYSE, detailing the major stations

in its rise and demise and its varied dealings with the Far Rockaway resident community. It concludes with a set of retrospective meditations – conversations with a few of the most active PRYSE participants – on the social and individual issues and conflicts, including those of race, class, turf and institutional affiliation, that characterized the four years of PRYSE.

The remaining three chapters reconsider a few of the larger issues that arise through the case study: community policing and justice strategies; young people, their safety, and law enforcement; change initiatives and the practice of evaluation; and community partnerships and community change. The people who research school violence and the people who research CCIs and the criminologists and those who look at the history of anti-poverty initiatives don't all come together neatly in the literature, but this dissertation endeavors a first step to bring these seemingly disparate conversations together, in the belief that a larger view informs the work each is trying to accomplish.

Picking up from the case perspective of Chapter 4, in Chapter 6 we turn again to the three PRYSE partner institutions involved in the law and justice system, but now move into a discussion of the national developments in “community policing,” “community justice,” and “community” mediation and courts. We look at a few of the resulting field initiatives in the Rockaways, including the local chapter of the federal Weed & Seed policing strategy. One theme that emerges is exemplified by the image of police officers and prosecutorial staff taking on roles in bringing up young people that formerly (or otherwise still) belonged to social workers, teachers, community leaders and even parents. This creates conundrums for personnel who are, after all, not social workers or teachers. Perhaps more importantly, they *remain* law enforcement and

criminal justice personnel foremost. They cannot help but deal with the problems of young people, and even more so the problems *blamed* on young people, as targets of social management. In the same decades that their agencies have taken on more community partnership commitments, they have also implemented increasingly hard-line “law and order” policies contributing to the growth of prison and detention systems. Are efforts at partnership models involving justice and police co-opted by – or do they in fact function as *a technology* of – what has been described as the “cradle to school to prison” system? And is it any wonder that community residents do not usually respond to partnership offers with the expected cooperation, but more often eschew or even resist these offers? We touch upon indications and examples of resistance and backlash.

Youth may have been the object of attention throughout the PRYSE initiative and in the creation of SS/HS, but young people had almost no input in how their own problems were defined. The absence of their voices also represented a gap in the work of the PRYSE Evaluation Team. Chapter 7 documents our attempt to provide a corrective. On behalf of the Evaluation Team, I was able in the spring of 2002 to organize and co-conduct a set of focus groups with 41 young people from a Rockaway high school. The transcripts give a view of what young people thought about their own situations: What concerns did they consider most important at their schools and in their neighborhoods? What needs did they see? Their observations and thoughts, in particular on the security regime at their school – which had suspension rates far above the New York City average, and which they described as at-times draconian – lead to a concluding excursus on how recent trends in both education policy and school policing have combined, in the course of campaigns to create “safe schools,” to shape schools in predominantly poor and

minority neighborhoods into *sites for testing out and implementing criminal justice tactics*. This also shows us the contradictions and tensions that can result when coalitions are formed without considering clashes of organizational missions and philosophies, most fatefully: those of criminal versus social justice.

Other paradigms – particularly those transporting *the accountability order*, as well as those viewing the youth and other residents of these neighborhoods primarily as *risks to be managed* – also arrive via the managers and “street-level bureaucrats” (as Lipsky, 1980, classically described) who implement federally-funded projects. In Chapter 8 and the conclusion, we end with a broad analysis of the PRYSE project, the local implementation of the federal Safe Schools/Health Students legislation, by reviewing its limited accomplishments as well as its arguably more impressive failures to deliver on its six stated missions to improve the lives of youth, and thereby the community, in the Rockaways. We consider evaluation politics generally and review findings from other CCIs and other SS/HS sites to discover that a lack of political strategy, accompanied by a lack of attention and effort to the structural roots of problems like school and community violence, contribute to the limited accomplishments of CCIs in general, as well as to the related failure of evaluation to produce compelling evidence of community change. The dissertation concludes that CCIs may still hold promise as an anti-poverty strategy, but only if they can engage questions of inequity, foster community education (meaning broadly of the community that the interventions are intended to impact, and not only the professionals working within it), and directly address race, class, gender, sexuality and power conflicts as they relate to the people in the places targeted for intervention.

National patterns of school violence are not strongly related to general patterns of violence or lack of social integration in society. However, national systems of education that produce greater achievement differences between high-achieving and low-achieving students tend to record more violence.

(Akiba, et al., 2002, p.1)

CHAPTER 1

From Third Way to Rockaway: Safe Schools, Healthy Students

The modern comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) treated in this dissertation first arose in the space created by the withdrawal of government funding for social programs, when philanthropies stepped in to promote the community change that the War on Poverty had been intended to achieve. Over the last two decades, CCIs have been embraced by the federal government programmatically, as a model for many types of anti-poverty initiatives and strategies.

The decades beginning with the Nixon administration saw a systematic dismantling and underfunding of many of the major urban programs of the 1950s and 1960s. This was accompanied by a series of changes in the structure of federal spending, beginning with “bundling into block-grant formulas, which greatly favored smaller cities and suburbs over central cities” (Peterson et al., 1986, p. 21; and Judd and Swanstrom,

2002, p. 240 as cited in Persons, 2004, p. 66). The Reagan presidency (1981-1989) later initiated sweeping cuts to social spending, including the elimination of the Community Services Administration, which had been the administrator of the Great Society's War on Poverty programs. The tide began to turn from public to private responsibility for "sound" social policy (Boris, 1999, and Lenkowsky, 1999, both as cited in Silver, 2006). During this period political rhetoric and action have turned from *poverty* as a pressing social problem to *welfare dependency* as the focus of concern (Silver, 2006). Under the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton, massive welfare reform legislation placing work requirements on recipients and aiming to radically reduce the welfare rolls was ushered into law via the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.

Even as the center-left parties in Britain and the US came to speak of a "Third Way," "New Democrats" and "New Labour," politicians on the right rallied around strategies of governance that adopted a progressive rhetoric, and that in fact had once been the domain of the political left. Once-radical sounding 1960s and 1970s concepts like empowerment and self-help were, by the 1990s, being embraced by Republican social policy leaders like former Rep. Jack Kemp of New York and by President George H.W. Bush with his "thousand points of light." Hyatt (2001) argues that these strategies had great utility for the political right as "post hoc rationalizations for the removal of public-sector resources from poor communities" (p. 221). At the same time, at least until

the Obama administration, an urban political agenda was replaced with a focus on “hometown America” (Persons, 2004, p. 68).²

Race figured strongly in the turn away from political and material support of American cities, as “urban programs and urban policy had become deeply associated with African Americans and thus were primed for a political backlash” (Persons, 2004, p. 66). More precisely, dominant constructions of race, ethnicity and culture, combined with white suburban voters increasingly reacting against the gains of the civil rights movement and the perceived upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, *and* the loss of Congressional representation among older industrial cities that had begun decades earlier, all contributed to a political landscape in which “community” or “civil society” became the focus of political rhetoric and action (see Cruikshank, 1993).

That CCIs became attractive in this context meets the logic of the politics of the time, what Nikolas Rose has called advanced liberalism: such initiatives emphasize atheoretical and apolitical approaches to improving individual and community life. However, this dissertation assumes that the apolitical stance is a politics of its own.

Comprehensive Community Initiatives and Community Change

From the late 1980s into the 1990s, anti-poverty strategies embraced in the philanthropic world began to focus on comprehensive, longer-term, place-based and resident-driven approaches to neighborhood revitalization (Fraser, Kick & Williams, 2002). Comprehensive community initiatives were first formulated as an anti-poverty strategy by large philanthropic foundations in the US in the late 1980s (Barchecheat, 2003;

² According to Judd and Swanstrom, “by the 1996 presidential election, neither Republicans nor Democrats spoke about helping the cities or the people living within them” (2002, p. 215, as cited in Persons, 2004, p. 68).

Kubisch et al., 2002; Pitcoff, 1997; Smock, 1997) and are widely regarded as the latest generation of “community building” approaches to “promoting change in [so called] distressed communities” (Kubisch, 2005, p. 17). CCI ideals tend to uphold a holistic approach to social problems in poor neighborhoods, as well as a commitment to the development of community capacity through community participation. More recently the federal government has embraced CCIs as models for “systems change,” emphasizing their reliance on “evidence-based practice” in environments characterized by scarce funding and “structural barriers” to the achievement of desired outcomes (Federal Partnership Project, n.d.-b). Although it is rarely acknowledged in federal or philanthropic descriptions of such initiatives, the CCI is the latest manifestation in a long history of attempts to address complex social problems in urban, high-poverty, majority African American and Latino neighborhoods by drawing together as many resources as possible in one “targeted” area (Stame, 2002).

There is no single widely-cited definition of “comprehensive community initiatives” (Barchechar, 2003; Silver & Weitzman, 2009). CCIs are variously referred to as public-public partnerships (in contrast to, but conceptually developed from public-private partnerships), interagency partnerships, and inter-sectoral or cross-sectoral partnerships, the latter particularly in business, management and public policy circles (Hall, et al., 2005; Levitt & Pulidindi, 2009; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Besides an orientation toward collaborative governance, CCIs also share in common a concern for broad policy problems; long-term and strategic community-building efforts; and a focus on building social capital, leadership, and community capacity (Silver & Weitzman,

2009). Brown & Garg (1997), examining the nomenclature used for CCIs in the 1990s, find that they:

have also been referred to as comprehensive community-building initiatives (Stone 1996), comprehensive neighborhood-based community empowerment initiatives (Eisen 1992), comprehensive, collaborative persistent poverty initiatives (Fishman and Phillips 1993; Rosewater 1992), or simply community-building initiatives (Jenny 1993) (all as cited in Brown & Garg, p. 23).

Depending on one's academic, activist and professional orientation, CCI-type efforts in the neighborhoods in which they are implemented are also variously called interorganizational collaboratives, coalitions (as was the case with the initiative that is the subject of this dissertation), partnerships, coordinating councils, and less commonly, strategic alliances.

In implementation of these initiatives, "community" refers to the people who stand to benefit most from the programs implemented and who live in the area, although disagreement exists over whether community representatives are sufficient to represent the interests of the community at large (see Sullivan and Stewart, 2006). In addition, sometimes people who work in but do not necessarily live in an area stand in as representatives of that "community." But community is much more complex, both as a concept and in practice, than federal or even philanthropic engagements of it imply. Community "is used both as a description and as a prescription" (Taylor, 2003, p. 34). It is used descriptively (people with a common interest or at least in regular interaction), in a normative sense (a place of solidarity and *Gemeinschaft*), and instrumentally (community as agency and intervention) (Taylor, 2003). As Taylor points out, it is in this last sense that politicians and policy makers often confuse and conflate descriptive and

normative views of community and assume that only good can come of any initiative so characterized. We will be forced to explore and confront these assumptions about “community” at many points in the following work.

“Comprehensiveness” is not a new strategy in terms of the priority to include those impacted by policies in decision-making about those policies; indeed, the influence of liberal democratic theory well precedes the CCI. The “comprehensive” in modern CCIs is variously defined, but generally reflects the assumption that the most effective use of limited resources will be accomplished by drawing together as many resources as possible, along with as many interest groups or “stakeholders” as possible, around a particular mission or set of missions. Sometimes “community” is conflated with “comprehensive.” The philosophy emphasizes the necessity of inclusion, not only of people across hierarchy but also of interest and authority, in impacting or changing everything from individual behavior to legislation; the goal is synergy and reduction of “waste,” be it dollars or energy.

As a basic premise CCIs seek to bring together as many place-based (either via residency, governmental authority or service-provision) stakeholders and their resources as possible to engage in long-term and wide-ranging program planning on issues that have ranged from suicide prevention to high school graduation rates. These initiatives blend top-down, funder-driven intervention with local (but not necessarily “grassroots”) governance over longer periods of time than were heretofore common for either the philanthropic community or governmental grant programs, all this “against a backdrop of increasing localization of responsibilities for human services and community

development, and in a climate of diminished resources for these activities” (Brown & Garg, 1997, Abstract).

Following in the tradition of War on Poverty programs, CCIs always include a requirement for evaluation research, as well as provision for “technical assistance” for the people in the “targeted” community or neighborhood. Among the new concepts used in evaluations of CCIs are “theories of change” and “total ownership” of interventions and attributes (Sullivan and Stewart, 2006). CCIs tend to be explicit in viewing the programs they implement as hypotheses, but are far from the first attempts at social experimentation. Nor are community-wide approaches to poverty reduction and human capital enhancement new to American policy and politics, and applied social science research has been common practice since at least the 1930s. But CCIs and their accompanying requirement of social-science evaluations have unfolded in sociopolitical and economic contexts that help distinguish them from previous efforts at change in urban neighborhoods.

One of the broader American governmental contexts in which CCIs began to flourish as part of a larger move to collaborative, “partnership” approaches is *central government devolution*: the shift, at least in ideals, from central responsibility and authority to regional or local control, “as well as increased responsibility placed on private philanthropy for addressing social problems” (Alexander, 1999; Schram, 2000, and Wolpert, 1997, as cited in Silver, 2006, p. 35). Long after the “New Federalism” was coined as a slogan in the 1980s, the 1990s saw a shift in “policy responsibilities and discretion to state governments and also to limit the national government’s power” (Cho & Wright, 2004, p. 447). The extent, intensity and reality of this devolution – “the

passing of responsibility and (partial) authority for activities and services of the federal government to state government, and from state to local governments” – have been debated, but observers agree at least that such shifts have been evident in intergovernmental relations (Zalenski & Mannes, 1998, p. 5). CCIs operate under the devolutionary proscription that change is possible only if neighborhood or community-level authority and responsibility for human services is manifest (Crawshaw & Simpson, 2002). At the local level, the goal is to rearticulate a local government “that is more effective, efficient, and just than traditional response schemes,” particularly in the areas of law enforcement and criminal justice, but also in education, health and other human service arenas (Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 172).

As early as 1984, some grassroots comprehensive initiatives developed involving privately-funded grants and cross-sectoral partnerships, but they were not yet known as CCIs. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston, launched by the Riley Foundation, and the Core City Neighborhoods started by a Catholic diocese in Detroit are two early examples that turned into non-profit organizations and still operate today (Smock, 1997).

In the late 1980s in the United States, influential philanthropic foundations began implementing projects that were then and continue to be characterized as “comprehensive community initiatives” or “community change initiatives.” At the outset, funding for such projects came “almost exclusively by foundation money” and was most heavily emphasized by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF), the Ford Foundation and the Surdna Foundation in part as “traditional project-based initiatives [had] proven unsustainable” (Pitcoff, 1997, para. 5). These projects were viewed as innovative in their

emphasis on “the merger of two traditionally separate fields of philanthropy and development – human service reform and community development” (Pitcoff, 1997, para. 4). They were and remain “located in poor, urban communities where physical and economic decline, social isolation, and political disempowerment are the norm” (Kubisch, et al., 2002, p. 1). From at least the George H.W. Bush presidency and throughout the 1990s, the federal government began embracing this “comprehensive community” strategy and began using the same descriptor – CCI – to describe funded *projects* as well as policy-related *strategies*.

Both philanthropy and government employed and employ predominantly quantitative and empirical social scientific research as the guide and justification for the approach, with an emphasis on program evaluation. Evaluation has become, at least in government-initiated CCIs, a requirement for consideration of funding, and reflects and supports what Strathern (2000) called the “audit culture” which “endorses government through the twin passage points of economic efficiency and good practice” (p. 1). Wedding the quest for accountability to government anti-poverty efforts has long roots, as Weiss (1987, p. 40) points out: “The surge in evaluation research in the 1960s was so closely intertwined with social programming for the disadvantaged that it is difficult to disentangle their history.”

Another distinguishing feature of CCIs is a long view of community change, at least when compared with more traditional short-term funding cycles for grant programs (both in philanthropy and government). Some early CCIs were funded for as many as seven years and the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s New Futures Initiative has been in place since 1988 (New Futures for Youth, 2010; Pitcoff, 1997). In the 1990s, CCIs were

viewed as vehicles for neighborhood capacity building and were explicit in their intention to incorporate “neighborhood governing bodies” that would “act as a kind of neighborhood ‘think tank’” (Pitcoff, 1997, para. 6). Some of these initiatives had an explicit priority for “bottom-up community revitalization,” such as the Surdna Foundation-sponsored Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the South Bronx, begun in 1992. The Aspen Institute along with the Annie E. Casey Foundation devoted resources to develop approaches to evaluation that would move beyond process and beyond attempts to force-fit complex initiatives into previously existing evaluation rubrics (Connell, et al., 1995). The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s 1995 Urban Health Initiative decided to implement CCIs with a “citywide focus over a neighborhood one” (Silver and Weitzman, 2009, p. 86).³

But the extent to which CCIs actually accomplish “community development” or “capacity building” remains unconfirmed. Service delivery reform and community development may remain distinct, even as CCIs attempt to merge them (Frusciante, 2004). Although approaching social problems via a multi-pronged strategy that includes participation of the people bearing the burden of those problems is not new (as local people have long organized themselves to change local conditions) what is unique about the CCI and accompanying discourse surrounding the “revitalization of distressed communities” is “the tacit acceptance of federal devolution and the ascendancy of local community-based strategies to center stage” (Gittell & Wilder, 1999, p. 341).

By the late 1990s CCIs begin to enter academic discourse more frequently (as evidenced by comprehensive electronic database research on peer-reviewed journals

³ We shall return to discuss the efforts and evolving views of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Aspen Institute in Chapter 8.

covering the topic marginally or directly).⁴ The literature on CCIs, mostly applied research, focuses largely on evaluation and improvement either in terms of outcomes or implementation. Critical evaluators have argued that because CCIs lack the actual “theory of change” they espouse, they cannot hope to produce evidence of change. This is attributed in part to what Mills (1972) called the atheoretical “abstracted empiricism” of much evaluation research, as well as of the government’s clear preference for quantitative research. For instance, the federal Education Department’s “What Works Clearinghouse” (WWC), a review of education research established in 2002, relegates qualitative inquiries to the category of “weaker research” (St. Pierre & Roulston, 2006, p. 674). Because of the complexity of evaluating CCIs, quantitative evidence beyond the programmatic level is difficult to come by, a topic to which we will return in Chapter 8.

Less scholarly attention has been paid to the extent to which CCIs actually build community capacity or promote community change. Of course, these questions of capacity and change are highly thorny issues about which volumes of books and academic articles have been written. In 2001, Chaskin attempted to craft a definitional framework with which to capture the complexities and subtleties of “community capacity,” as well as the degree to which from-below community organizing (“CO”) groups involved themselves in CCIs. He notes that “there is little clarity about the meaning of community capacity and capacity building in practice” (p. 292). Using case studies of two sites of a Ford Foundation-funded CCI, the Milwaukee Neighborhood and Family Initiative, Chaskin offers a multi-layered definition of community capacity:

⁴ The Federal Partnership Project (2008) produced a literature review of CCIs including 85 sources. The Chicago-based Institute for Comprehensive Community Development (Walker, 2010) has compiled a bibliography of significant research studies on CCIs comprising about 30 sources (with some overlap with the FPP’s review).

Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of a given community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized effort (p. 295).

In this view, building community capacity occurs via one of “four major strategies: leadership development, organizational development, community organizing, and fostering collaborative relations among organizations” (Chaskin, et al., 2001 as cited in Chaskin, 2001, p. 299). But Chaskin does not emphasize community organizing as critical to the success of CCIs, whereas a small minority of other scholars emphasize that organizing can be key to sustainability, the holy grail of CCIs (Berlin, et al., 2001 and Joseph & Ogletree, 1998). Parachini and Covington (2001) and Hess (1999) are other notable exceptions in the literature for pointing out the lack of CO groups, or even a CO orientation in funder-driven CCIs nationwide, although empirical, systematically-gathered evidence has not been compiled to definitively establish these claims.

From my perspective, having spent the better part of six years engaged in evaluation and academic research activities within government-funded CCIs, these latter claims resonate well and make sense given the politics of federally initiated and funded work: to be invited to a table of stakeholders that include empowered decision-makers from justice, education and mental health institutions often requires a stance that appears apolitical. The “picnics and participation” version of community organizing or “community building” can also be thought of as underlining the distinction between *project-based* community development and *power-based* community development (Stoecker, 2003).

Brown and Garg's (1997) aforementioned "backdrop of increasing localization of responsibilities for human services and community development" includes a view of "distressed communities" that produces them not as subjects but as *targets* for intervention. This stance of subject to object may be magnified by what Garland (2003, p. 458) calls "a reliance upon an *analytical language* of risks and rewards." In this language he sees an expression of the influence of economic rationality on – in his argument – approaches to crime. Others see its logic applying more broadly to the contemporary management of populations-at-large by a process of "negotiated self-governance" (Newman, 2001, as cited in Taylor, 2009, p. 7).

The CCI focus on inclusivity brings great challenges in implementation, evaluation and sustainability of such initiatives (Frusciante, 2004). The avoidance, ignorance or simply absence of considerations of the lived experience of inequality along ethno-race, class, sexual and gender lines has implications for how CCIs are perceived by residents of "targeted" areas, as well as how successfully they are implemented, what real community change gets produced, and whether they are sustained. This avoidance, particularly when policy relates to cities, may represent a political efficacy: by not articulating their public policies as relating to race or even to cities, policy-makers and program initiators may believe that they can more effectively sell the need for funding to a broader public (Lawrence, 2001). Indeed, it was the school rampage shooting in Littleton, Colorado – a middle class, white suburb – in April 1999 that catalyzed politicians to find the funding to implement the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, about which we learn more below. Once that funding is achieved, however, this same avoidance of race and class may become a handicap in the effort to enter partnership with

community participants, for whom the experience of inequality is a central and unavoidable fact of life. This was my own observation in the Rockaways project, an experience that served to confirm Maskovsky's insight on this genus of partnership:

Importantly, resistance and refusals are born not from the exclusion of inner city residents from city politics and policy making. Nor are they merely the vestiges of a bygone era of racial segregation. Rather, they are produced in the new dynamics of neighborhood participation itself. It is thus the very inclusion of African American residents in the new devolved institutions of urban governance – and, notably, the insistence that they participate in a diverse, not a black, community – that produces a new sense of racial inequality and new forms of class division in the new inner city. In this regard, it is the very social construct of community – the sublime ideal and enabling condition of neoliberal governance – that disrupts the relation of significant segments of the urban population to governmental authority and that creates new patterns of inequality (2006, p. 93).

CCIs mostly take place in the “new inner city” about which Maskovsky writes. And although the push by the government to partnership is assumed to be apolitical, the context in which the initiative in our case study emerged was fraught with politics and governance, from the framing of the issues to the consequences of its policies and practices (Simon, 2007). Accordingly the rest of this chapter explores the political and historical contexts that led to the announcement and implementation of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative in 1999.

Theories of School Violence and “The Columbine Effect”

Shortly after 11 am on Tuesday, April 20, 1999, two sons of middle class families in Littleton, Colorado carried out a plan that had been a year in the crafting: to kill as many people as possible at Columbine High School, where both were students. The young men, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, intended to detonate two large bombs which

they had planted in the cafeteria in duffle bags, having selected 11:17 am as the time of that room's peak usage. They planned to shoot any survivors from the explosion.

Having dropped the bags in the room, Harris and Klebold returned to their cars to wait for detonation. Their plan could have killed as many as 600 people.

The bombs failed to explode, so the two returned to the school, armed with shotguns, other guns and pipe bombs, and shortly thereafter began shooting students. They used semi-automatic firearms (9-mm handgun and rifle) and sawed-off shotguns. They had acquired these weapons illegally.⁵ By 12:30 pm, Harris and Klebold had directly and indirectly injured 27 people and killed twelve fellow students, one teacher, and themselves.

The tragic and shocking events at Columbine were rampage shootings, defined as “attacks on multiple parties, selected almost at random” (Newman, et al., 2004, p. 15). When such events occur in schools, the “rampage shooters are predominantly white boys” (ibid.) like Harris and Klebold, who also were presumably straight. The events received heavy media coverage and sparked anew the American gun-control debate as well as debates over the roots of social violence, with blame cast on everything from Marilyn Manson's music to dark trench coats. As Lawrence and Birkland (2004) write, the violence prompted the 106th Congress to issue a rash of bills related to school violence. According to their research, 35 percent of all bills dealing with school violence introduced during the session came forward in April and May 1999; they note that “no more than 9 percent of such bills were introduced in any other month of that legislative session” (p. 1195).

⁵ Klebold and Harris acquired these weapons through a friend, Mark Manes, who pleaded guilty to two felonies and was sentenced to 6 years in prison; he was released to house arrest in 2002 (Pitzel, 2004).

Lawrence and Birkland performed a content analysis of three bodies of data: all debates on “school violence” from the 106th Congress as transcribed in the Congressional Record; all bills introduced during that session using that phrase; and, finally, major media sources’ coverage of the Columbine massacre in the period from April through August 1999. They found a compelling pattern. While news stories immediately following the events overwhelmingly focused on guns and pop culture, and Congressional debate followed suit, the actual legislation had a different focus. The lion’s share of bills (over 40 percent) concerned “school programs and security.”⁶ The authors also found that “criminal justice was the third-ranked problem definition in legislative bills and debate, while media coverage of this angle on school shootings was virtually nonexistent” (p. 1200). Perhaps this finding is unsurprising given that a national model of crime governance for schools was already in place via the Safe Schools Act of 1994 (Simon, 2007) and other measures. As we shall see, Columbine did not create new policy trends, but gave new impetus to existing ones.

The Columbine incident opened an opportunity for politicians not only to re-introduce politically-charged gun control questions, but also for the Congress to send money directly to school districts, thereby bypassing state governments (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004, p. 1204). Americans were attentive to the media during this time, or so those who responded to surveys reported: According to the Pew Research Center, as recalled by Addington (2009), 68 percent of Americans said they “followed the coverage of Columbine ‘very closely’” (p. 1427). Media attention and an uptick in parental fears

⁶ Lawrence and Birkland further specified the “school programs and security” category to include “inadequate anti-violence programs and security measures at schools” (p. 1197).

for their children's safety at school, as reported in national surveys, coincided with policy changes at the level of the school nationwide.

For a time, the extremely atypical Columbine rampage shooting came to be seen almost as paradigmatic of "school violence." In academic and public parlance, this is called the "Columbine effect."⁷ Notwithstanding, definitions of school violence are as varied as the proposed approaches to it. Common and academic wisdom seems to concur that violence in American public schools has become worse over time, although careful attention to what is meant by "worse" is critical. Empirical confirmation over the longest term is challenging to impossible, due to historic changes in the conceptualization and record-keeping of violent behavior in schools. For example, Denmark, et al. (2005) claim that violence in schools "has changed from small irritations to serious and increasingly dangerous action" (p. 1). A Centers for Disease Control timeline sees an "epidemic of youth violence sweeping the nation" in the 1990s (CDC, n.d.). However, some historians argue that while violence in public schools may be qualitatively different, particularly in times when guns are widely available, it has always been a feature of educational settings (Newman & Newman, 1980). In addition, racial integration in American public education brought a wave of violence within schools that is not generally included in contemporary understandings of "school violence."

Within the circles that devote attention to school violence, a number of overarching perspectives dominate, and represent a spectrum of political ideologies and tactics. On the most conservative pole we find a "zero tolerance" philosophy; this is an expression of rational choice theory, to be explored in greater detail below. On the most

⁷ For a compelling analysis of the relationship between the "Columbine effect" and school violence policies as implemented through it, see Muschert and Peguero, 2010.

progressive pole, we find something akin to social reaction theory: if students are treated as dangerous and criminal, they will live up to those expectations. The federal government, perhaps following mainstream academic and applied researchers who focus mainly on individual behavior, generally accepts the premise that “school violence includes a range of activities, including assaults with or without weapons, physical fights, threats or destructive acts other than physical fights, bullying, hostile or threatening remarks between groups of students, and gang violence” (National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, 2002, p. 1). Policy-making in recent decades has tended to rely on a two-pronged approach of “tough on crime” criminology and a public health model that emphasizes risk factors and individual-level “antisocial” behavior. The theoretical underpinnings of this approach (though rarely explicitly stated) lie in criminological theories of social control and self-control.

Hirschi’s “social bond” theory and Gottfredson and Hirschi’s subsequent “general theory of crime” both share a concern with “individual deviation from given societal norms,” thereby eschewing societal origins of crime, and this despite being mainstream sociological theories (Hagan, 2008, p. 167). This school attributes criminal behavior to children who do not bond to the embodied conventional values and norms of parents and school. Additionally, as Henry explains: “failures in family socialization and institutional control can lead to the inadequate exercise of self-control” (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, and Hirschi & Gottfredson, 2001, as cited in Henry, 2009, p. 1247). These theories also rely on the idea that free rational choice is mediated and constrained by cultural and structural factors (Henry, 2009).

By contrast, critical academic and applied researchers have emphasized a “wide-angle interdisciplinary lens to the nature of what constitutes violence in schools” that can reveal underlying and/or cumulative “violent and subviolent themes that permeate our society” (while acknowledging that there is value in distinguishing some types of school violence as Newman, et al., 2004 do with “rampage school shootings”) (Henry, 2009, p. 1248). Henry has developed a multilevel analytical approach encompassing constitutive elements of school violence from the individual through societal/cultural, and argues that understanding the reciprocal interrelationships of the range of violence within the school setting is the antidote to the culture of denial in school (which permits Columbines to occur). Although Henry is unconcerned with CCIs specifically, his insight also can be applied beyond the school to the culture of denial among participants in those efforts.

Muschert & Peguero (2010) take Henry’s multilevel typology of violence and apply it to the policies generated via the “Columbine effect.” They also consider the ways in which school violence policies, as implemented and as reflections of the priorities at each level of violence, generate their own unintended consequences – in particular, socializing youth to a culture of control and authority – sometimes even exacerbating the problem of violence in schools at other levels (p. 118). In the end, they argue that improvements in **communal school organization**, rather than intensified measures of social control, are most likely to produce a learning environment that is safe for all participants (emphasis mine). While this comprehensive theoretical approach and its accompanying insights would sync well within a CCI framework, it is far from institutionalization within government and policy circles.

Much of the research on school violence has understandably been pragmatic as parents, students, schools, administrators, politicians and academics seek “best practice” strategies (a variation on “what works”) to prevent violence and address incidents that have already occurred (see for example the CDC published monograph by Thornton et al, 2000, *Best Practices of Youth Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook for Community Action*). Much of this research focuses on individual factors that contribute to violent incidents in schools. In the UK, New Zealand and Australia, and in the aforementioned minority of academic scholarship in the US, critical social theories extend the view to the broader social and community factors that contextualize school violence. Some in the government may know about this work, but it is unlikely to affect public policy; such academic work is not included in government databases shared with funded programs on “best practices” or “best bets” (the latter phrase being used by the National Youth Violence Prevention Center (2002), led by the CDC). To take one example, critical race theory is not, in the government view, about practice. As we will see in Chapter 8, a small slice of philanthropy has begun to directly address structural racism in crafting community-building projects, but federal initiatives remain silent on the structural roots of inequality, even under a new administration that has redirected explicit attention to urban life and poverty.

Targeting “School Violence” in the Context of Developments in Criminal Justice and Public Health

By the 1990s, the nation was several decades into a “tough on crime” orientation to social control (also known as the “just deserts” or retributive justice model), which began taking shape during the 1970s as a backlash against rehabilitative approaches to

adult criminal behavior. New penal policies combining risk management and populist punitiveness (Garland, 2001; Simon, 2007) brought an unprecedented incarceration rate to the US, now the highest in the world at 756 prisoners per 100,000 population as of December 2008 (Walmsley, 2009).⁸ As Rosenbaum explains, “The (US) government has responded to crime by dumping large sums of money into the criminal justice system, producing an enormous and costly set of tactics for conducting a protracted ‘war’ against drugs and crime” with little empirical evidence to support its efficacy (2002, p. 173).

Already in 1973, New York State passed the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws with high mandatory sentences for simple drug possession, now well-critiqued (Casella, 2003) and recently reformed thanks in part to strong coalition politics. Complementary policies were fostered across society as a whole during the Reagan-era “War on Drugs,” itself a renewal of the “War on Drugs” declared by President Nixon in 1971. It should be noted that Nixon’s earlier “War on Drugs” emphasized direct investment of federal dollars in local criminal justice agencies as a means of bypassing “the traditional structures of congressional representation and party machines” (Simon, 2007, p. 262).⁹

In New York City under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the 1990s, the NYPD implemented “quality of life” and “zero tolerance” policing modeled after Wilson and Kelling’s (1982) Broken Windows theory, to the extreme of enforcing long-forgotten

⁸ A wealth of legal, sociological and criminological scholarship exists outlining the changes in sentencing policy and practice that led to characterizations of US criminal justice policy as “tough on crime” or as exemplifying retributive justice because of its strong focus on punishment, or more recently on incapacitation, as the major or sole response to behaviors that violate criminal law (and sometimes behaviors that merely violate norms); and on how this has led also to an incarceration rate unprecedented in the world, particularly among young African American men (see Mauer, 2002).

⁹ The same device was pioneered by previous administrations in poverty programs, and can also be seen operating in modern-day devolution models, including Safe Schools/Healthy Students.

ordnances against dancing.¹⁰ The strategy was advocated internationally by former NYPD Commissioner William Bratton. The related rational choice criminology, relying on market-based economic theory and bearing striking similarities to the classical school of criminology that had embraced the utilitarian pleasure principle, was (re)popularized by Clarke and Felson (1993), and had been a focus of some criminologists as early as in the late 1960s (Akers, 1990).

As rational choice theories came to dominate mainstream criminology and criminal justice policy, they also exerted influence on public school governance via the direct interweaving of criminal justice personnel and strategies in educational settings (Casella, 2003). Just as mandatory criminal sentencing was firmly rooted in the justice system after Congress passed three-strikes provisions into law in the 1980s, mandatory, non-discretionary punishments came to be meted out in public schools (Schwartz & Rieser, 2001). Schools are increasingly “governed through crime” (Simon, 2007). The criminal justice orientation is reflected or refracted in preventive and punitive strategies toward violent behavior in schools that were being implemented several years before the “Columbine effect.” At times these strategies showed all the hallmarks of Cohen’s (1972) classic “moral panic.”

Already in 1994, Congress signed into law the Gun-Free Schools Act, which required a one-year expulsion for any student who brought a firearm to school. Clearly, deterrence of firearms and explosive devices in schools was at the heart of the new law,

¹⁰ The NYPD website’s recent Frequently Asked Questions page explains “zero tolerance policing” this way: “‘Zero-Tolerance’ was instituted over ten years ago as a full-scale strategic attack on all crime and disorder in the City. In particular it focuses on the enforcement of ‘quality of life offenses’ such as drinking alcoholic beverages in the street, urinating in public, panhandling, loud radios, graffiti and disorderly conduct. By quickly addressing and correcting these minor problems, the Department sends the message that more serious crime will not be tolerated” (New York City Police Department, 2010).

but it also required “local educational bodies to maintain a policy of referring students who bring a firearm or weapon to school to the criminal justice or juvenile delinquency system” (Insley, 2001, p. 1047). The law in effect put the “federal seal of approval” on the increased adoption of zero-tolerance approaches to school discipline (Insley, 2001, p. 1046).

The term zero tolerance was first coined in 1986 to describe a program crafted in San Diego by then United States Attorney Peter Nunez, who began impounding seagoing vessels carrying any amount of narcotics, no matter how small. The program became widely known through incidents such as the seizure of a \$2.5 million yacht after one-tenth of an ounce of marijuana was found on board (Skiba, 2000). As applied to schools, “zero tolerance” policies generally relieve administrators of discretion in decision-making in cases related to disciplinary code violations, instead automatically turning these over to law enforcement authorities. Zero-tolerance policies were first tried in schools in the late 1980s and spread to more and more school systems in the 1990s, at a time when a number of highly-publicized rampage killings in schools preceded the massacre in Littleton.

Columbine gave further impetus to expand such policies nationwide and to apply them beyond drugs and weapons in schools, to behaviors that had previously not been criminalized (Devine, 1996; Fine, et al., 2004; Giroux, 2009; Reyes, 2007). Zero tolerance became an acceptable response in many districts for cases involving alcohol, any violence, and in some instances any behaviors prohibited by a school’s student disciplinary code, including making threats and swearing (Skiba, 2000). School districts across the country were criticized for suspending and expelling students for even the

most minor infractions (for detailed accounts of such incidents, see Ayers, et al., 2001), a legacy that is still in place today.¹¹ Forms of zero tolerance have become the norm at American public schools despite the lack of evidence that such policies deter violent, dangerous or harmful behaviors, and in spite of a growing body of evidence that the policies disproportionately impact black and Latino students (Hirschfield, 2008).

Zero tolerance policies in public schools today typically require automatic suspension or expulsion for a variety of behavioral violations, even as a substantial number of scholars, policy analysts, educators, parents and students agree that “removing students from classrooms has detrimental effects on students” (Fine, 1991; Janerette and Sheperson, 2009, p. 2). Despite evidence that excluding youth from school typically represents the beginning of the end of the suspended students’ educational careers, as suspension is the harbinger of dropping out or expulsion, zero tolerance policies abandoned rehabilitation via in-school suspensions as used in the late 1970s and early 1980s (whereby students were removed from their “regular” classroom in favor of keeping them within the school, though not always necessarily engaging in academic work) (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). As is well-documented in academic scholarship, but hardly a focus of public policy, African American students face the harshest disciplinary consequences in public schools, particularly boys. These consequences, from corporal punishment to expulsion, fall on those students already most marginalized in the school setting and most likely to enter the criminal justice system in the wider community:

¹¹ As recently as October 2009, Zachary Christie, a 6-year-old, first-grade student in Delaware faced a 45-day suspension for bringing a combination fork, spoon and knife camping tool to school (Urbina, 2009). Scholars have noted that concurrent with retributive justice models is a trend toward treating juveniles as adults within the criminal justice system (for a review of this trend see Barrett, 2007).

“minorities (especially Blacks and Latinos), males, and low achievers” (Noguera, 2003, p. 1; see also Ferguson, 2000; Gregory, 1995; Skiba et al., 2002; Wallace, et al., 2008).

In the 1990s scholars and community activists began articulating a critique of public schools that, they argued, had come to appear and operate more like prisons than educational institutions, although instances of such comparisons date back several decades (Hirschfield, 2008). The increased presence of law enforcement officers and school safety agents within public schools has led to a number of controversies and conflicts, including over Fourth Amendment rights of students while in school. Critical scholars, civil liberties advocates and political activists have charged that policing in schools has created a “school to prison” or “school to jail” pipeline for African American male students in particular (Fenning & Rose, 2007).

At the same time that more rigid disciplinary policies took hold in a wider swath of schools, technology in the form of school surveillance equipment (such as video cameras, weapons detectors and entry control devices) and other “visual security measures” (including prominent placement of safety agents or guards), were increasingly present in public schools throughout the 1990s, and even more so after Columbine. As Addington (2009) notes: “Since Columbine, use of school security to prevent school violence has expanded into suburban and rural schools and has changed to incorporate cutting-edge technologies” (p. 1429). Besides an increase of school-employed security personnel, regular law enforcement personnel also show increased presence in schools (Brady, et al., 2007; Brown & Benedict, 2005), with school safety officers (also known as

school resource officers or “SROs”) in New York City public schools coming under the direct command of the NYPD by 1998.¹²

It must again be noted that “tough on crime,” criminal justice-oriented approaches show one side of the strategies being implemented in the name of stemming “school violence” in the period before and after Columbine. The aforementioned involvement of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in addressing school violence indicates another side: the increased focus on mental health and public health. In the 1980s, scholars and advocates of a public health perspective on youth violence in the US began to take part in the academic and policy discourses on violence in general, and school violence in particular. The CDC took up violence as a public health issue, with an accompanying focus on prevention, starting in 1979 (CDC, n.d.). The model now most widely embraced by the federal government is based on “risk and protective factors” and is the basis for a strategy that is particularly influential within SS/HS and beyond: the Communities That Care® package (to which we return below).

Given that mental health services available to communities in the US were inadequate after the deinstitutionalization of mental health in the 1950s and 1960s, and given that prisons and jails became the de facto supplier of such services for adults as well as juveniles, the pursuit of violence as a public health issue was perhaps inevitable. Indeed, in some places, police have been transformed into mental health workers to address the needs of communities for inadequate mental health services; at the least, they are “frontline” mental health workers for people in crisis, regardless of whether they are sufficiently trained or prepared for this role (Lamb, et al., 2002).

¹² On December 20, 1998, the New York City Police Department became the first police department in the United States to assume control over security within its city's public schools (some consider this a takeover, others a merger). This figures strongly in Chapters 4 through 7.

In 2004, the House Committee on Government Reform released a report with findings from a survey of 524 juvenile detention centers nationwide, according to which “about 15,000 children with mental illnesses were improperly incarcerated in detention centers in 2003 because of a lack of access to treatment” (Kaiser Health News, 2004, para. 1). Dr. Ken Martinez of the New Mexico Department of Children, Youth and Families, testifying at the Senate Committee hearing during which the study was discussed, “said the data showed ‘the criminalization of mental illness’ as ‘juvenile detention centers have become de facto psychiatric hospitals for mentally ill youth’” (Pear, 2004, p. A18).

Clinton Era Initiatives and Intergovernmental Relations: The Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program Takes Shape

Before Columbine, the latter part of the Clinton administration saw an influential increase in the number of rampage school shootings in the United States, with a peak in the 1997-1998 year of six “shootings in which the offender targeted the school per se” (Newman, et al., 2004, p. 51).¹³ In September 1998, President Clinton and a small circle of his staff met at the White House with representatives from schools that had suffered rampage shootings and from the corresponding local governments in Jonesboro, Arkansas; Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; and Springfield, Oregon.¹⁴ After the meeting, the White House issued a press release announcing a new funding program,

¹³ Newman, et al., 2004 distinguish rampage school shootings from other types of school-related violence. Specifically these assaults “take place on a school-related public stage... involve multiple victims...; and involve one or more shooters who are students or former students of the school” (p. 50).

¹⁴ Jonesboro (March 1998) and Paducah (December 1997) are rural school districts; Pearl (October 1997) and Springfield (May 1998) are both suburban districts. The two young men convicted of the Jonesboro incident at the Westside Middle school (Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden) were among the youngest ever charged with murder (they were 13 and 11 years old, respectively, at the time). For details of all of these incidents, see Newman, et al., 2004.

“School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV)” for local education agencies. Clinton called for a “White House Conference on School Safety,” which followed in October.¹⁵ Public fear and concern were on the rise, driven in part by media sensationalism, but also by the actual (albeit quite small) rise in these particularly violent and shocking shootings in suburban and rural, white and often middle-class places that had been less likely to see such assaults in the past. In the public discourse it was of little relevance that empirical study of violent behavior showed that schools were, then and today, among the safest places for children.

This was the backdrop against which the Clinton administration developed a variety of programs, including Safe Schools/Healthy Students, to address youth violence and particularly the violence of youth within public schools. The federal government sought to foster multi-perspective approaches for preventing violence at public schools, and to do so by incorporating a combination of agencies from at least three federal departments: Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services. Congress funded a variety of initiatives, all focused on what they saw as “multi-faceted approaches” to safe schools. The focus was also increasingly on integration of data gathering and “best-practice” processes.

In October 1998, Congress appropriated \$165 million to the Department of Education and an additional \$40 million to the Center for Mental Health Services

¹⁵ Another White House Conference on School Safety was not held until October 2006, during the George W. Bush tenure. Several school shootings had occurred in the fall of 2006, including what has come to be known as the “Amish school shooting” in which five girls (who were targeted for their gender) were killed by an adult gunman with no relation to their school, after being held hostage in a classroom (Kocieniewski & Gately, 2006). The 2006 School Safety Conference inspired some renewed media attention to gun control as several news reports on the conference noted that unlike Clinton, George W. Bush never mentioned guns during the conference (see, e.g., Milbank, 2006). Clinton had also convened a White House Council on School Violence, comprised of the Attorney General and secretaries of Education, Health and Labor. No mention of that council can be found in government databases of public documents after 2001.

(CMHS) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), charging them to work together on a violence prevention initiative (Goldstein, 2004, pp. 8-9). According to Goldstein, the “provisions of the new law surprised many people,” particularly as regarded the funding to CMHS, because in general all school-based initiatives, including those focused on youth violence, until then had almost always had funds allocated through the Department of Education (p. 8). Eventually, \$25 million of the \$40 million given to CMHS in 1998 was contributed to the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program.

Also in 1998, Clinton requested that the Departments of Justice and Education produce “an annual report card on school violence,” which resulted in the “Indicators of School Crime and Safety,” still published today, from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Kaufman, et al., 1998). The first annual report in 1998 promised that data gathering would play a strengthened role in the future, and to

include a more regularly conducted School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey scheduled now for 1999 and every two years thereafter, and a new biennial school-based survey starting in 2000 that will collect data on crime and discipline problems in our nation’s schools (Kaufman, p. iii).

The National Center for Education Statistics most recent annual “Indicators of School Crime and Safety” (Dinkes, et al., 2009) includes 21 measures that stand as the federal government’s operationalization of school crime and student safety.¹⁶

¹⁶ The most notable differences between the 1998 and 2009 reports are the inclusion of a set of three indicators of “Discipline, Safety and Security Measures” that had been absent from the original (introduced in the 2005 report) as well as indicators of school environment including teachers’ reports on school conditions (introduced in 2007) and students’ reports on “hate-related” words directed at them or viewed in graffiti (introduced in the 2000 report) (Dinkes, 2009).

Safe Schools/Healthy Students was among the measures conceived as a response to school violence during this time. Planning for the initiative brought together the departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services to develop a single, streamlined application process that would permit local education agencies to apply to a single Federal source — the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the Justice Department — for grants to support a broad array of developmental, educational, mental health and public safety services. However, at the time that the first SS/HS solicitation for proposals was introduced into the Federal Register in April 1999 (three weeks before the Columbine incident) it was still unclear to what extent the program would be funded by Congress.

And then came Klebold and Harris. After that, it mattered little that Columbine was an exceptional crime, or that school-aged children and youth in the United States are less likely to be victims of violence within school grounds than outside them, or that Black and Latino youth are the likeliest groups to report feeling unsafe at school. The media portrayed the sensational and sensationalized crime in Colorado as part of a growing threat to students at schools, without examining nuances of race, class, gender or sexuality. By June of 1999, the Education Department's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Office began collaborating with the National Threat Assessment Center of the US Secret Service "to decipher the characteristics of school shooters and bystanders," presenting a "Threat Assessment In Schools" report three years later (Fein, et al., 2002).

Among the actions that Congress took during this panicked period was a decision to fund Safe Schools/Healthy Students, drawing together monies from the three departments in a new combination. Although Congress later was credited with initiating

the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program as a response to Columbine, as we have seen the three executive branch agencies had been developing the program for months, had announced an intent to commit funds in February 1999, and had published a request for proposals in the Federal Register on April 1, 2000. But the shocking violence of Harris and Klebold assured Congressional funding with a minimum of debate.¹⁷

SS/HS is authorized under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1994.¹⁸ It was touted from the start as an “unprecedented collaboration” between three departments of the United States Federal Government (see Goldstein, 2004; and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 1999; although the phrase is ubiquitous throughout the internet describing SS/HS-funded sites). These massive departments were the collaborators on paper, but in practice, three smaller divisions within each shouldered the work: the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at Justice; the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools (OSDFS) at Education; and the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), a component of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency within Health and Human Services.

¹⁷ As an example of the “sense of the Congress” at the time, consider House Resolution 148 accepted on April 27, 1999, and brought forward by Congressman Tom Tancredo of Colorado condemning the “heinous atrocities which occurred at Columbine High School.” In addressing the House, Tancredo, who was perhaps best known for his vigorous anti-immigration work, offered this analysis: “Do we believe in God or not? An answer to that question is the whole of what we take away from the Columbine massacre, for the answer means everything. We either coast in the cultural currents of a facile nihilism, or we embrace God on our knees and pray for His grade and forgiveness.” In expanding his remarks, he argued that “ours is a culture wrapped in cotton candy nihilism” where “poses and attitudes of nihilism are struck and celebrated.” To exemplify these celebrations, he began with “the academy” where, he said, lie “a courant ideologies.” Tancredo commented that, “feminism, postmodernism, structuralism, scientific materialism all presuppose a purposeless universe without transcendent order where society is predicated on power and violence” (“Expressing the sense of the Congress,” 1999, p. H2327).

¹⁸ This law was first enacted in 1986, and reauthorized in 1994 under Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It has subsequently been incorporated into the “No Child Left Behind” Act of 2002.

The SS/HS initiative was unique for a number of reasons, not least of which was its inception being announced by Attorney General Janet Reno. Federal programs on this relatively small scale typically are initiated without announcements from the cabinet (as was emphasized to me in a 2004 communication with William Modzeleski, who had been the director of OSDFS at the time SS/HS was devised). Reno was identified as crucial to the initiative's development, which was interpreted as "remarkable" because her focus went beyond criminal justice and punitive responses to the problem of youth violence, and instead emphasized youth development and public health (Goldstein, 2004, p. 2). The latter reflection is sourced to Ricki Seidman, who had served as a White House attorney and as an advisor to Reno. Another of Goldstein's interviewees credited Seidman with keeping the process moving forward in that:

She came right from the Attorney General. I don't think it was lost on any of us that she had a close personal relationship there, and that she was probably going to go back and report on how well or how poorly we were doing in this. It kept us all on task (p. 36).

Sonia Chessen, who as the director of the White House Council on Youth Violence had attended the September 1998 White House meeting with people from schools that had witnessed rampage shootings, recalled that "no one at that meeting said, 'we need metal detectors,' 'we need crisis prevention plans.' They were just saying, 'mental health services'" (p. 4).¹⁹

The key personal relationship in shaping SS/HS was between Seidman and William Modzeleski, OSDFS director and a deputy assistant undersecretary at the

¹⁹ Chessen would eventually become Special Assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. She then moved on to Deputy Director of Operations at the Health Group of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Department of Education.²⁰ Modzeleski came to this position from the Department of Justice and had maintained strong connections with staff at his old agency, particularly Shay Bilchik, the OJJDP administrator, so the “buy-in” between Education and Justice was in place from the outset (Modzeleski, personal communication, April 27, 2004; Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, 2007). Seidman had also built a professional relationship with Bernie Arons, then Director of CMHS at Health and Human Services, whom she contacted to bring his department into the initiative (Goldstein, 2004).

What the officials who developed and implemented SS/HS characterized as most “unprecedented” was the attempt to overcome the “silo mentality” among departments in the federal government. The broad perception among government workers was that their departments and agencies were often operating in “silos or smokestacks,” explained as “government-speak for narrow isolated areas of interest” (Goldstein, 2004, p. 5; Modzeleski, personal communication, April 27, 2004).²¹

Two other government “silos” nearly joined the SS/HS Initiative in 2000. The Department of Labor was invited to participate by the SS/HS “Interagency Policy Team” after the partners had already formulated the initiative. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman committed \$40 million to the Initiative in February 2000, despite her department’s initial

²⁰ As of this writing, Seidman is a “Senior Principal” for the “TSD Communications and PR” firm in DC. Her political career included heading the Clinton/Gore campaign “War Room,” serving as White House Deputy Communications Director, Counselor to the Chief of Staff, and Director of Scheduling and Advance for the President during the Clinton Presidency. She is also known for her role in getting Anita Hill to come forward with sexual harassment charges against Clarence Thomas (The return of Ricki Seidman, 1992). Seidman also became Joe Biden’s Communications Director in 2008. She served as Executive Director of “Rock the Vote.” Before joining the PR firm, she served two years as Deputy Associate Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice (TSD Communications, Inc., n.d.).

²¹ Apparently this term is popular in management and policy circles, although I could find no academic etymology for it. Quite apart from the silo mentality, Goldstein (2004) found that the physical distance between the offices of Justice and Education, less than 2 miles apart in Washington, and the offices of Mental Health more than 20 miles away in Maryland, presented challenges to the staff involved.

reluctance (Goldstein, 2004).²² In June of 2000, however, the funding was removed from a House bill. The Department of Labor therefore did not enter the initiative, in an ironic contrast to the federal government's request for community partners at SS/HS sites regardless of funding (Executive Office of the President, 2000). We can only speculate how Labor's participation might have expanded or altered the focus of SS/HS and of the local initiatives that applied for funding under SS/HS. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was also initially interested in becoming a partner to the SS/HS initiative, but lacking any appropriation (Congress had disbursed the funds to SAMHSA), CDC instead "detailed" a program evaluator.

In the end, Goldstein's history of SS/HS refers to "four principals" who were central to implementation: Bilchik, Modzeleski, Seidman, and Mike English of the CMHS. Their influence was critical to the project taking shape and being implemented, because of their status within each of their respective departments. These four also decided which applicants received SS/HS grant awards in the first round, choosing the first 54 communities that were funded out of 447 applicants (Goldstein, 2004, p. 29).

Congress made \$100 million in funding available for SS/HS in the 1999-2000 budget, with the funds to be drawn from the participating departments as follows: \$60 million from Education/OSDFS; \$25 million from Health and Human Services/SAMHSA; and \$15 million from Justice/OJJDP. Additional funding was tapped in the initiative's first year from another Justice Department agency, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). Under a program called "COPS in Schools" or CIS, this office provided funding to establish partnerships on the CCI model

²² In the initial absence of statutory language governing SS/HS, the initiative's "Interagency Policy Team" (IPT) was created to provide direction and make policy decisions for SS/HS. It is "comprised of senior-level representatives from each of the Federal SS/HS partners" (Kelly, 2007, p. 3).

between local police precincts and public schools around the nation. Funds from CIS to SS/HS were earmarked specifically for the hiring of law enforcement officers to work in public schools (“School Violence: What is being done to combat school violence? What should be done?” 1999). Beyond this COPS does not appear to have played a major role in the actual planning or implementation of SS/HS programs or sites, however.²³

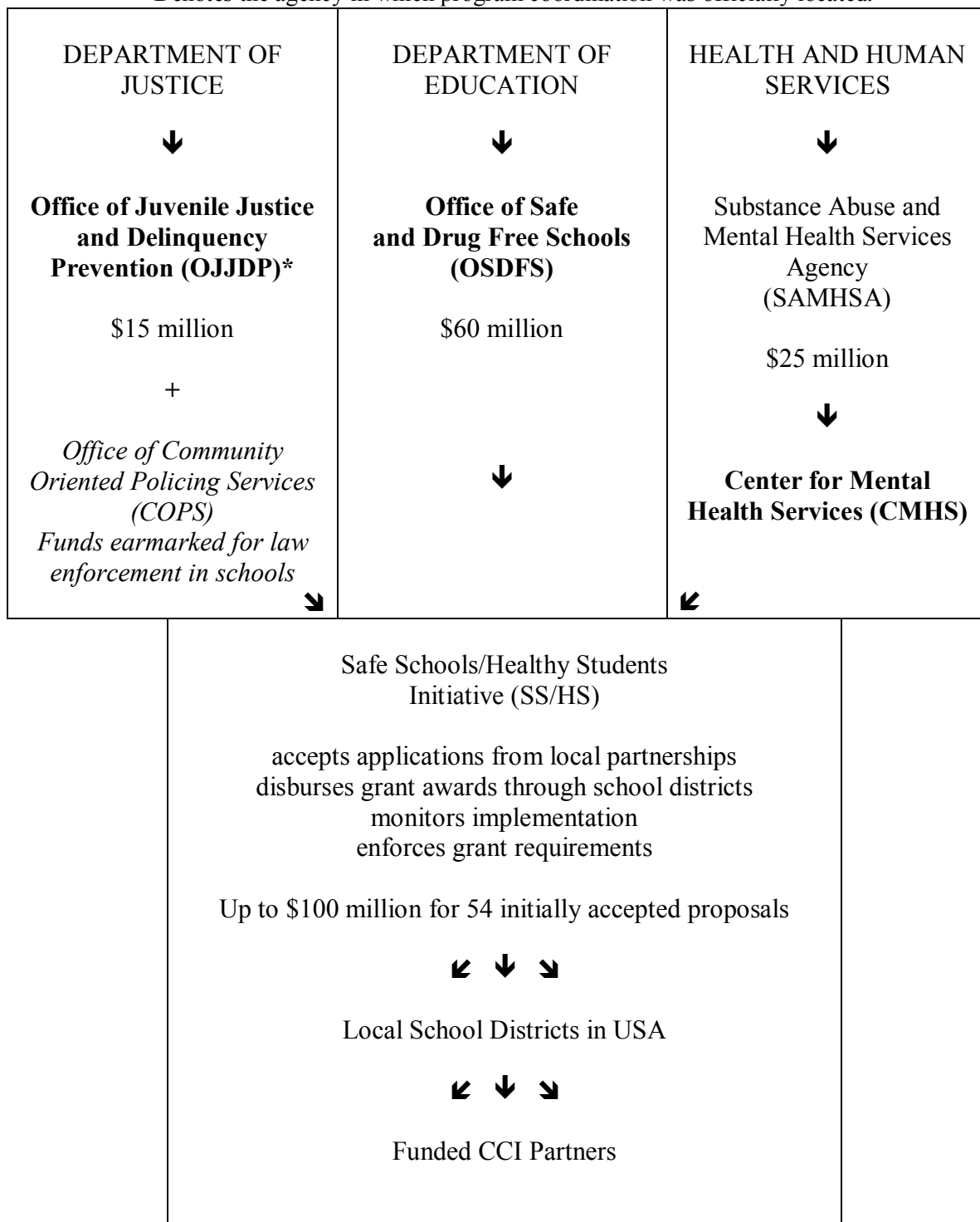
Figure 1.1 below visually depicts the organization of SS/HS as initiated under the Clinton administration and funded by Congress in 1999. In bold are the three partnering agencies that devised the program, jointly requested proposals, and decided on grant awards to community initiatives located around the country.

²³ COPS was first established under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 with the aim of advancing community policing and funding the hiring of 100,000 new police officers around the country. As a division of the Justice Department, COPS was assigned to “distribute and monitor” an impressive “\$8.8 billion expenditure over six years” (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, n.d.). The first COPS director, Joseph Brann, was a signatory on the Federal Register announcement of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program in 1999. Although his office ended up as a relatively inactive partner in SS/HS, it contributed at least an initial \$6 million to hire police or school resource officers through the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program. One of the principals involved in SS/HS would later claim the COPS contribution to SS/HS totaled \$80 million (“President Clinton Announces,” 1999; “School Violence: What is being done to combat school violence? What should be done?”). How the latter figure was accounted is unclear. COPS in Schools funding was discontinued in 2005.

Figure 1.1. Structure of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Program, 2000.

Bolded: Agencies with executive roles in the SS/HS program.

* - Denotes the agency in which program coordination was officially located.



“Do You Ask Permission?” Reflections From the Federal Partners

I met and interviewed William Modzeleski at the Safe Schools/Healthy Students National Conference in April 2004. His words to me would confirm Goldstein’s account of that year that “someone close” to Attorney General Janet Reno had leveraged relationships across the three departments to make Safe Schools/Healthy Students a reality. He described the internal workings of the initiative as follows: Justice oversaw the evaluation side. Health and Human services supervised training and technical assistance. Education got the money out.²⁴ He called the process an act of “subvert[ing] our agencies for the greater good of helping kids.” I asked him to reflect on the process that led to the SS/HS initiative taking shape; he said that:

We had to do something that would bring about structural change within a school system, within a community. This program must force school systems to collaborate and coordinate with others who had a responsibility for working with kids – namely the mental health system and the juvenile justice system.

The language seems to suggest that in Modzeleski’s view, the schools represented the element within the system as a whole that blocked progress by being too insular, unyielding, or unwilling to cooperate with the mental health and juvenile justice systems as other institutions necessary to “working with kids.”

Modzeleski said that SS/HS survived the transition to George W. Bush in 2001 because of key supporters in an unspecified appropriations committee who liked the

²⁴ Provision of technical assistance for SS/HS grantees was originally awarded in September 1999 to the National Mental Health Association, in partnership with the National Association of School Psychologists, which created an “SS/HS Action Center.” In 2002, a grant was awarded to a pre-selected private contractor, Education Development Center, Inc., to create a “tool kit” for grantees, but instead led to their leadership of a new technical assistance provider called the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention. The Initiative began with a “Communications Team” which eventually became the “Communication Resource Center.”

concept of agencies collaborating. Bush, who began his tenure in the office of the President with a call to rally the “armies of compassion” in the United States, was committed to the concept of encouraging such partnerships, and also to expanding federal funding for faith-based organizations. By executive order the White House created a Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives in each of five major cabinet agencies (Bush, 2001). Perhaps SS/HS also survived the transition due to its easy fit with the “armies of compassion” that Bush envisioned. For his part, Modzeleski said that his main job was to push the concept, but “not get involved in the politics.” When I asked him how one works in the federal government and avoids politics, he said, “The process is much harder than the concept, so for me the question was ‘Do you ask permission or beg forgiveness after?’” (W. Modzeleski, personal communication, April 27, 2004).

I attended the 2004 SS/HS conference together with two colleagues from PRYSE, the local SS/HS site where I had by then been working for more than three years as a program evaluator. The conference, called “Strengthening Our Future: Developing Healthy Children and Youth, Strong Families, and Safe Communities,” was welcomed by J. Robert Flores, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention administrator appointed by George W. Bush (Flores had been selected to replace Shay Bilchik, one of the key figures in the creation of SS/HS).

Flores was passionate in his address, particularly as he reflected on a 14-year-old young man whom he had met during his work as a prosecutor of childhood sexual abuse cases. The abuses faced in his short life had so damaged the youth that he was literally unable to speak, Flores said. To the conference audience of non-profit professionals, program evaluators and community workers, Flores said he felt strongly that

collaborations such as SS/HS, had they existed back then, could have helped the young man. Flores's work as a prosecutor had failed him, as it didn't provide a link to much-needed social services:

When you find a young man in this situation, you also find departments in the government that don't see eye to eye. The Department of Justice comes into situations with a heavy, deep sound. We bring things that people in many communities don't want to see. We need you as the people who go before us. We desperately need for you to succeed. Your work goes beyond the core things that law enforcement typically focuses on.

Flores had some critical and surprising views on the work the people attending the conference were being asked to do. He pointed out that one of the strengths of the SS/HS initiative was to reduce the number of places that community-based organizations had to go to seek funding. He said a common question in government was, "Why is it necessary to apply for 15 grants for one child that has multiple needs?" But the idea of bringing everyone to drink at the same place reminded him of the metaphor of the watering hole: "it is place to get what you need but also the place the predators come to hunt."²⁵

Much of the buzz at the April 2004 conference was about the phenomenon of police stepping into social work roles around the country, sometimes using the force of law to connect young people with services. In an illuminating session, a professor of child psychiatry who had founded a unique partnership between child development specialists and police officers in New Haven explained his expanding definition of community policing: to be sure that police are properly trained to deal with the real struggles communities face, especially in their dealings with young people. Dr. Marans,

²⁵ Flores would eventually be found, in 2009, to have "violated federal ethics and procurement rules in awarding hundreds of thousands of dollars in sole source contracts to ideologically favored companies and individuals" including the World Golf Foundation's First Tee Initiative, whose honorary chair is former president George H.W. Bush (Johnson, 2009, para. 1).

director of the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence, told the audience that “sometimes the only way to get a kid services is to arrest the kid.” He was clear that in today’s society, “there are no inpatient [mental health] services for them, no beds for them.” Dr. Marans explained that our citizenry and government have “decided to fund police, not mental health.”²⁶ So he became involved in training police to encourage them to ask why a crime happened, and to intervene skillfully and appropriately on behalf of children who may suffer the effects of experiencing and witnessing violence for the remainder of their lives. As one who teaches police in hopes of alleviating those traumatic effects, Dr. Marans said the key in his work is to get the criminal justice system to “find ways of using authority in a benign way.”²⁷

My experiences at this and other SS/HS conferences attended during my time with PRYSE served to confirm the larger picture described so far, of SS/HS having been shaped, on the one hand, by the drive to create federal inter-agency and federal-local initiatives, with corresponding cross-agency and cross-sectoral partnerships on the local

²⁶ In point of fact, and very much highlighting Dr. Marans’s argument about the development of policing, the inpatient mental health beds *do* exist – in prisons and jails. Dr. Marans’s endeavor to (further) professionalize the social-work role of the police and justice systems might be contrasted to Rosalynn Carter’s call, as a mental health crisis advocate, for adequate mental health funding. The former First Lady noted where the “in-patient” beds are located in a 2006 presentation to the Columbia School of Journalism: “The leading cause of death in young people ages 15 to 24 is suicide. Ten young people will die of suicide in our country today. The mental health system in our country today is in a shambles and there’s nothing you can do about it. We have to start all over and transform it. We don’t do what we should do for children in our country. We wait until they get in trouble and then we react. *The largest mental health institution in the country is the Los Angeles County Jail and Rikers Island is next.* There will always be something more immediate. There will never be anything more important than helping our children” (Carter, 2006, emphasis mine).

²⁷ A program like SS/HS would not be possible without a law enforcement commitment to community policing. Below, in the context of the Rockaways and the activities of the PRYSE project with which I worked, we will see many examples (starting in Chapter 4) of interventions exactly like the ones Dr. Marans describes, in which local police and prosecutorial staff take on the traditional role of social workers. Chapter 6 features a broader, extended discussion on the development in recent decades of community policing and community prosecution, and the related growth of community mediation and other “diversions from the justice system” and “alternatives to incarceration” (ATI), asking to what degree these trends are extensions of – or also attempts to ameliorate or even counteract – the concomitant dominance of retributive justice, “zero tolerance” and the other strategies that have filled the jails, juvenile detention centers and prisons.

level; and on the other hand, by the increasing interaction and to a degree merger of the criminal justice with public/mental health perspectives on the problem of “school violence,” to the point of (as one example) open acknowledgment that the line between police and social workers could no longer, or should no longer, be clearly delineated.

Coalition and Evaluation as SS/HS Grant Requirements

Safe Schools/Healthy Students was not originally referred to specifically as a program to fund comprehensive community initiatives, and also was not limited to applicants in declining, isolated, or disempowered areas; but it required applicants to “demonstrate evidence of *comprehensive community-wide strategies* for creating safe and drug-free schools and promoting healthy childhood development” (Kopanda, 1999, emphasis mine). The original SS/HS initiative overview explained that each prospective grantee site must “develop comprehensive, integrated community wide plans to address” all of the following elements:

1. Safe school environment;
2. Youth alcohol and drug prevention, violence prevention and early intervention;
3. School and community mental health preventive and treatment intervention services;
4. Early childhood psychosocial and emotional development services;
5. Educational reform; and
6. Safe school policies (SS/HS, 1999; Kopanda, 1999).

Under elements 2, 3 and 4, the original SS/HS announcements of 1999 proposed examples of activities and interventions that demonstrate a clear priority for “evidence-based” strategies. It is worth noting that by 2005, all mention of the “educational reform” element (#5) had been removed from SS/HS notices. Several other features of the SS/HS

requests for proposals (then and now) bear emphasis in terms of the program's relevance within the broader government trend favoring CCIs, and in our contextualization of CCIs as strategies of governance and potential community-wide change. SS/HS requirements allow only local educational agencies (LEAs) to act as primary applicants for funding. LEAs must obtain co-signatories from at least two other local governmental or public entities – at least one each from the fields of law enforcement and public/mental health. The original SS/HS notice required proposals to include a written agreement between a school superintendent, a head of the local public mental health authority, and a chief local law enforcement executive in a given target area. As of the 2009 announcement, SS/HS expects an LEA application to be accompanied by signatures from authorized representatives of the local law enforcement agency, juvenile justice agency, and a public mental health authority.

The 2004 notice of the SS/HS grant process gave renewed emphasis to the comprehensive approach, along with a united vision of community: “Key to this critical feature is recognizing that a comprehensive approach reflects an overall vision for the community, not the isolated objectives of a single activity, such as the reliance on security devices alone” (Safe Schools/Healthy Students, 2004, p. 30756). Repeatedly, grant applicants are reminded of the “initiative's intent to support comprehensive, community-wide change” (Safe Schools/Healthy Students, 2004, p. 30757).

Despite this intent to cast a community-wide net to address youth violence, student health and safety, the original SS/HS request for proposals *did not explicitly require* evidence of a history or plan to include actual students, parents, teachers or other community residents in the applicant's initiative. In the 2007 announcement, after years

of experience from the 336 SS/HS grantee sites since 1999, a new priority was given to community involvement by the requirement that the memorandum of agreement on a proposal, as signed by local education, justice and mental health representatives, would:

Describe how multiple and diverse sectors of the community, including parents and students, have been and will continue to be involved in the design, implementation, and continuous improvement of the project (Safe Schools/Healthy Students, 2007, p. 26695).

When the original SS/HS initiative was announced, prospective grantees were informed that the application process was open *only* to school districts that had *already* formed operant “community partnerships” involving at a minimum the following entities: the school district, the local public mental health authority, local law enforcement, family members, students, and juvenile justice officials, as well as an evaluation team. We shall see in the following chapters that in the Rockaways, as distinguished from some other sites around the country, the coalition did not pre-exist the application. Furthermore, the school district played a remarkably minimal role in the Rockaways project, while criminal justice, law enforcement, mental health and mediation services took center stage. Yet even Modzeleski would remind me during our interview that SS/HS was not a crime prevention program, but a *school-focused* initiative.

Despite requirements to the contrary in the SS/HS proposal request, funding was sometimes granted even if prior partnerships were not already in place at the applicant school district. In the Rockaways, as at other sites, community partnerships formed *specifically* in order to apply for the grant. In a 2004 joint interview with the SS/HS program coordinators from Justice/OJJDP and HHS/CMHS, they told me their offices had been aware that the partnerships did not pre-exist in *most* of the communities that had

applied to SS/HS, but “the planning phase of the grant built those partnerships.” The thought was that “you can hit the ground running when you have partnership already, but people can pull it off [without pre-existing partnership] anyway, with the right person at the helm” (Dressler and Middlebrook, personal communication, April 27, 2004).

The two officials agreed that one important goal of SS/HS was to institutionalize it at local school districts around the country: “We want to make it like Head Start.”²⁸ As the most important players from their respective agencies working on SS/HS, they emphasized another important impact of the initiative: they said the program was forcing schools and communities to look at what it means to be evidence-based. Many of the workshops at the 2004 and other SS/HS conferences I attended were devoted to evaluation and evidence-based programs.

In addition to the practical experiences of implementation, federal-level staff administering SS/HS gained access to a growing literature evaluating the sites, as each project was originally required to devote no less than 5 percent (increased to 7 percent in recent years) of its total budget to evaluation research and data collection activities; each site submitted interim reports at six months and cumulative reports at twelve months. This research has clearly entered federal considerations of how to guide CCI activity, as evidenced by the October 2009 launch of a website by the Federal Partnership Project, cciToolsforFeds.org, which is billed as a tool kit “to help Federal staff plan, support, and help sustain comprehensive community initiatives.” The project was initiated in 2006 by the OJJDP’s Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (CCJDP) (OJJDP, 2009, para. 1) and is meant “for federal staff who work with

²⁸ Head Start, implemented in 1965, is the longest running of President Johnson’s War on Poverty programs; it serves children age 3 to 5 from impoverished families.

Comprehensive Community Initiatives.” The site includes materials for grant seekers (Federal Partnership Project, “How this toolkit can help you,” n.d.-d, para. 1).²⁹ It offers a chronology that assigns to the Justice Department’s Weed & Seed Initiative (which we consider in Chapter 6) the status of the first CCI to be promoted by the federal government, dating it to 1991 (Federal Partnership Project, “Inventory of Comprehensive Community Initiatives,” n.d.-a). A closer look shows that the work team detailed by CCJJD to select the site’s “toolkit development team” was actually staff of a Virginia based consulting firm called EDJ Associates, which received more than \$8.5 million in funding from the HHS as assistance for FY 2006 – FY 2007, and \$27 million in contracts for the same funding period, with \$3.4 million of that coming from Justice (OMB Watch, n.d./i).³⁰

Although this initiative by one of the key agencies involved in SS/HS includes a wealth of information on how to design an evaluation, the long-planned national evaluation of SS/HS *as a whole* during the initial rounds of grants remains unavailable three years after the originally scheduled publication date, in 2007 – surely dismaying

²⁹ The CCI “tools for feds” website explains that the CCJJD saw two trends over 15 years that inspired its creation. First, that “Federal agencies have **increasingly encouraged grantees to forge partnerships** in the community among the multiple agencies serving youth and families” (Federal Partnership Project, “How this toolkit was created,” n.d., v, para. 1, emphasis in original). Second, many Federal agencies had already “entered into **partnerships within and across Federal departments** in the belief that coordinated Federal action results in better service to localities” based on the benefits of governmental modeling of such behavior, as well as pooling (limited) resources and expertise (Federal Partnership Project, “How the toolkit was created,” n.d., para. 3, emphasis in original). CCIs are distinguished here for having a “systems change” orientation, as contrasted to the characterization of “conventional service-delivery program(s)” as fragmented (“What is a CCI?,” n.d.). In answering the question, “what is a CCI?” they define “systems-change” as “a change in the *way* that a community makes decisions about policies, program services, and the allocation of resources” (emphasis in original).

³⁰ The fedspending.org website is a project of OMB Watch, which “exists to increase government transparency and accountability; to ensure sound, equitable regulatory and budgetary processes and policies; and to protect and promote active citizen participation in our democracy” (OMB Watch, 2009). Federal money categorized as “assistance” on the “fedspending” site includes spending such as grants, loans, insurance, and direct payments (e.g. Social Security). Their site also distinguishes money distributed via contracts and Recovery Act funds.

and bound to raise suspicions of a program so defined by, and devoted to, evaluation research. Felix et al. (2007) conducted an independent survey of SS/HS sites to gain an overview of evaluation strategies, to which we shall return in Chapter 8. They happened upon something I also discovered as I went about my own work, that the original SS/HS national evaluation data for the first (2000-ca. 2004) grant cohort are unavailable and have not been released to the public. Only a limited set of results from local evaluations were published as a monograph (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2008). I contacted the principal investigator from the contractor responsible for the national study, Research Triangle Institute (RTI), asking if he could share any results from it. His response indicated that short of a Freedom of Information Act request, such data and analyses would be unavailable:

We submitted 9 topical reports years ago and a final report in January. To my knowledge none of the reports has been released and I don't think they have plans to do so. Sorry I can't be more helpful (Anonymous, personal communication, 2010).

We can only speculate on why SS/HS would not publish the national evaluation results of a respected research establishment like RTI International, which has likely received millions of dollars in federal contracts over the years. It is true that conflicts between evaluators and the program managers who contract them are not unusual, as is widely documented in program evaluation reports and the academic literature; such conflicts also came up in the present case study. Controversy over findings or ownership of information is not unusual. Among evaluators, in the US and internationally, there is also the worry that evaluation might produce “policy-based evidence,” rather than the reverse (France & Utting, 2005, p. 87). As of 2010, the SS/HS website indicates that a

new national evaluator, MANILA Consulting, has been hired and is conducting a national evaluation of the SS/HS grant cohorts more recent than those that RTI was supposed to cover (RTI's evaluation would have included PRYSE):

The National Evaluation Team (NET) of MANILA Consulting Group, Inc., and its partners RMC Research Corporation and Battelle Centers for Public Health Research and Evaluation, are conducting a cross-site evaluation of the SS/HS Initiative (Safe Schools/Healthy Students, n.d., para. 1).

The author intends to follow up on this perhaps small but compelling mystery in the future.

The “Communities That Care”® Strategy and SS/HS

The work team responsible for the CCI toolkit at cciToolsforFeds.org conducted a literature review to get a comprehensive view of the field. In introducing the review, the Federal Partnership Project begins with an important and telling summary of the work contained within:

This review examines the latest literature available about past and current comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) and Federal partnerships that address risk and protective factors known to be associated with delinquent activity. (Federal Partnership Project, 2008).

The focus on “risk and protective factors” has become ubiquitous in federal social programming, including but not exclusive to CCIs, as well as in youth crime prevention and general public health public policy in Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands (Haines & Case, 2008). Much of the SS/HS rhetoric and the underlying concepts derive openly from the preventive approach based on the work of the well-published University of Washington, Seattle faculty sociologists, J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano. Hawkins is the founding director and Catalano

is the director of the Social Development Research Group, an interdisciplinary team of researchers promoting “healthy behaviors and positive social development” of youth (Social Development Research Group, n.d., para. 1). The group has produced an academic literature widely disseminated among public policy workers here and abroad and integrated into several SS/HS publications, including the SS/HS monograph of individual evaluations (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2008).

During the SS/HS funded project in the Rockaways, stakeholders were regularly exposed to, and socialized into, preventive-approach strategies for imagining and addressing social problems, including those broadly termed as prevention science, and more specifically those focused on prevention of violence and substance abuse among youth. The perspective dominated our field of vision in part because of the influence of federal consultants and state government offices at the Rockaways initiative.³¹ Much of our exposure to this perspective on community and prevention came via SAMHSA, which in 2005 finally took its commitment to the Catalano-Hawkins “social development strategy” to a logical conclusion of sorts by literally buying it. The paradigm’s creators had trademarked and marketed the rights to their strategy as a “complete prevention planning system for a healthy community.” Called Communities That Care®, the

³¹ The PRYSE proposal to the SS/HS (examined in Chapter 3) echoed the language of risk and protective factors at various points. Later on, after the PRYSE program manager Brenda Z. developed a relationship with the downstate office of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services in 2002, she and I underwent an intensive training in the logic of risk and protective factors sponsored by that office. Eventually almost everyone involved in the Coalition would be socialized to this logic as I was asked to conduct several “training workshops” at our Coalition retreats and meetings to disseminate the tenets of this approach. I also worked for several years with a different coalition in Staten Island that, like many other so-funded substance abuse prevention groups nationwide, also bore the name of the CtC package.

Catalano-Hawkins system had been owned by Massachusetts-based Channing-Bete, Inc. until its sale to the federal government for \$2.2 million (OMB watch, n.d./ii).³²

Epidemiological in approach, the system views a phenomenon like violence, for example, as something amenable to a “cure” via consideration of cause and effect that can contribute to change in both behaviors and attitudes (Ruttenberg, 1994). The Communities that Care (CtC) system begins with a six-month to year-long training process, conceived as “community mobilization” by Catalano and Hawkins, in which:

Communities are educated in the public health model of risk and protective factors, how to interpret the assessment of these factors, and how to link the choice of EBI [evidence-based interventions] prevention models to those risk assessments (Greenberg, 2010, p. 43).

The so-called CtC paradigm is embraced enthusiastically by policy makers, perhaps “...born out of a political necessity to understand the problem of youth crime and to identify, evaluate and implement effective and cost-effective solutions to this problem (France & Utting, 2005, as cited by Haines & Case, 2008, p. 5). The basic premise is that in the same way that smoking, high cholesterol foods and limited aerobic activity can be seen to “cause” a heart attack, so too do a host of “risk factors” contribute to problem behavior in youth (France & Utting, 2005). Clearly, not everyone who fits the “risk profile” for a heart attack will have one, but the logic of the public health model is that by persuading people to reduce their risk, and increase their “protective factors,” a healthier population results. As France and Utting (2005) note, risk factors are statistical “predictors” but don’t predict future behavior in the conventional sense (an important point often lost in the community training process) (p. 79).

³² Greenberg (2004) also notes that school-community-government partnerships have relied heavily on the Catalano-Hawkins prevention science and educated community leaders in its model of public health, beginning in the 1990s and continuing as of this writing in 2010.

Since 1995, a CtC youth survey has been administered across the US (Arthur, et al., 2007). That survey, based on the CtC strategy, examines the 23 risk factors and 10 protective factors that constitute the model. Risk and protective factors are conceptualized as lying across four domains: community, school, family, and peer/individual. Hawkins and Catalano identify these factors

as predictors of adolescent health and behavior outcomes through reviews of longitudinal studies of the etiology of behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, and violence (Arthur, 2007, p. 198).

The framework's popularity is due in part to the ease with which communities can learn the paradigm and translate the results into action. In fact, in their most recent work on the CtC survey, Catalano and Hawkins and their colleagues decided to dichotomize the presence or absence of risk and protective factors in survey responses, and use cut points to help communities render intelligible the findings from their surveys (Arthur, et al., 2007). Although it is true that communities may struggle to understand and interpret the quantitative data with which they are presented when they enter the CtC process, a phenomenon reported in the literature (and one which I can also confirm from having become so intimately involved with the CtC process through a year's worth of seminars devoted to the topic, in which I was paid to participate), they are also not trained to look beyond the data and its interpretation to its deeper theoretical underpinnings. In the language of the model, the "theory of change" is that increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors will lead to desired youth behavior outcomes. Critics have pointed out that "the paradigm avoids difficult theoretical questions about which risk factors have causal effects" (Farrington, 2007, as cited by Haines & Case, 2008, p. 6). The very streamlined, positivist framework of CtC makes it user-friendly for community

coalitions, allowing them to neatly stack opposing factors in facing columns, but at the same time, “issues of process and context are therefore marginalised in any analysis and discussions about ‘risk factors’” (France & Utting, 2005, p. 80).

Another critique of the strategy is that “risk factors are commonly identified independently of protective factors” (Farrington, 2000, as cited in Haines & Case, 2008, p. 7). Unfortunately, at this point, “less evidence is available about protection” (France and Utting, 2005, p. 80). In addition, France and Utting (2005) point out that “evidence concerning how far this type of community mobilization really ‘works’ remains limited” (France and Crow, 2001; Crow and others, 2004; Crawford, 1998, all as cited in France and Utting, p. 80).

Those most critical of the CtC approach – and here it must be noted that the voices of criticism in academic literature have come from the UK, with a notable silence in the US, at least from my own thorough searching of peer-reviewed journals – express the concern that “the risk factor paradigm can be used for anti-libertarian purposes by the state” (France & Utting, 2005, p. 81) in that

...risk may be understood as a governmental strategy of regulatory power by which populations and individuals are monitored and managed through the goals of neo-liberalism. Risk is governed via a heterogeneous network of interactive actors, institutions, knowledges and practices (Lupton, 1999, p. 87, as cited by France & Utting, 2005, p. 81).

Finally, critical scholars have also argued that “...the RFPP [Risk Factor Prevention Paradigm] continues to marginalize the underlying structural causes of crime” (Hughes, et al., 2002, as cited by Haines & Case, 2008, p. 11).³³

³³ My own work with the CtC process in two communities in New York City over a three-year period, one case of which is described in Chapter 5, bore out many of the concerns that critical scholars have raised about the approach.

Bringing SS/HS to the Rockaways

We began this chapter with a quote regarding an international perspective on youth violence, one that looks at violence in schools with nations as the level of inquiry. But this perspective is sorely lacking within the policy context that developed the SS/HS project. We have repeatedly underlined that SS/HS was attractive to the federal staff involved because it permitted pooled funding and resources among three large departments of the executive branch. This was an *explicit motivation* of inter-agency collaboration, and believed to promote fiscal efficiency and organizational synergy. Upon analysis, however, we must consider another compelling motivation for federal departments to embrace this strategy: Despite the devolutionary context, direct federal grants to local agencies or organizations interpolate direct federal input into local matters. While federal funds moving directly to, say, a New York City community school district appear to remove the intermediaries of New York State and even of the New York City government from the process, in practice the federal government does not bypass local government, agencies of which (such as the police) still participate. Rather, the federal government is bypassing the local political and administrative *decision-making* structures. As a result, local governmental and even more so non-governmental organizations and citizens are deprived of the direct access of attempting political influence on state and municipal government.³⁴ In short, it is unclear whether local organizations are actually empowered by engaging directly with federal agencies as funding agents, or instead subjected to a form of direct federal control, shorn of recourse to the local or state government – something that the older model of federal block grants

³⁴ These observations are indebted to Dorinda Tetens.

to states and localities still allows. As for community residents, although they are required as participants at sites, there is no formal entity at the federal level of the SS/HS initiative, our present example, to represent their interests or incorporate their input.

Insofar as the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program was meant to foster local partnerships, its launch had an immediate effect in the Rockaway peninsula of Queens, New York. As happened at other locations, the April 1999 announcement, with its promise of much-needed money to help address often severe problems, prompted the formation of a coalition among eleven Rockaway-based groups, including a school district, the local police precincts and the borough district attorney's office, neighborhood health and social service facilities, social science evaluators and faith-based groups, to join together in crafting a proposal for an SS/HS grant. In September 1999 the "Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety Education," which came to be known mainly by its acronym PRYSE ("prize"), was among the first set of applicants to win an SS/HS award, receiving \$8.4 million in federal funds, to be disbursed over three years' time through New York Community School District 27. The PRYSE proposal promised joint engagement of the partners in many programs, covering each of the required areas for SS/HS funding, among these: recreation for youth, mentoring, community mediation, parenting support, and behavioral therapy for violent teens; and also funds for school security equipment, a truancy program, and a "most wanted" local newspaper campaign.

The initial distance between the grantmakers and the local site was apparent in the honest mistake of the SS/HS press releases announcing the award from 2000, all of which named the project recipient as Ozone Park, New York. Ozone Park, in southern Queens, is the seat (then and now) of the superintendent's office for the school district that

includes the Rockaways. As late as 2009, a compilation of evaluation results of SS/HS projects around the country still named the Rockaways grantees as “Ozone Park” (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2009).

The PRYSE grant application had described “existing services and gaps in services” on the peninsula and emphasized that “more of Rockaway’s children, 41%, live in poverty, than anywhere else in the borough of Queens (29%) or the rest of New York City (36%)” (NYC ACS, 1998, as cited in PRYSE Proposal Abstract, 1999, p. 2). The application begins by characterizing the area as a “grim tale” of a “ravaged urban desert” that had already attracted other federal funding and intervention to the area, including the US Department of Housing and Urban Development’s HOPE VI “urban revitalization” program, the US Department of Justice’s Weed & Seed “community-based” strategy to reduce crime, and the designation of the local health center as a “federally qualified health center.” (Any entity so designated by the US Public Health Services agency must be located in and provide services to a medically under-served community.)

Before we can delve further into the subsequent history of the PRYSE Coalition and its interventions and interactions with members of the Rockaways community, we must turn first to that “grim tale,” establish the urban field within which this case study took place, and consider the facts of life in New York City’s most remote, and in many ways most unusual, neighborhoods.

It is *The World Without Us*, a testing ground for urban entropy, a place where a man was once chased and mauled by a pack of wild dogs, a legacy of Lindsay-era slum clearance, Moses-era central-planning hubris, and native New York development inertia.

(Nobel, 2010)

CHAPTER 2

Conditions of Existence on the Rockaway Peninsula³⁵

The narrative that opened the PRYSE application for funding from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program introduced me to a vision of the Rockaways that would thenceforth occupy the imaginations of the federal government reading our proposal, as well as of the participants in the CCI in the Rockaways. The PRYSE proposal admits that it has spun a “grim tale,” something one might expect to be crafted with some exaggeration given the amount of funding at stake. But I quickly learned that the view that many parts of the peninsula lived under bleak conditions was earnest and widely held:

³⁵ The Rockaway peninsula, the westernmost barrier beach along the southern coast of the Long Island, is interchangeably referred to by its residents as Rockaway, the Rockaways, and “the peninsula,” and sometimes erroneously by outsiders as Far Rockaway. Far Rockaway is only one of the neighborhoods, located on the peninsula’s eastern-most end.

Envision a community on a strip of land 11 miles long at the southeast corner of New York City bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Jamaica Bay. There are no movie theaters, no bowling alleys, no malls and few restaurants. One busy road splits the narrow peninsula, and is itself bordered by elevated train tracks. Access to the mainland is limited to two bridges for automobile traffic, and another for the train line. High density housing complexes surround vast areas of demolished property, once the beachfront bungalows of middle-class New Yorkers. You have just pictured the Rockaway peninsula, an isolated community located within Community School District (CSD) 27.

Because of its isolation and poor transportation system, children and families cannot take advantage of the economic and cultural opportunities available in the City; in fact, many have never been off the peninsula. The most visible and active peer groups for children are the gangs that dominate much of the community. Violence and drug abuse are rampant, and gunshots still echo through the night. The Peninsula epitomizes a ravaged urban desert. The Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education (PRYSE) proposes to bring that desert back to life by using Safe Schools/Healthy Students funding to create a comprehensive, multidimensional approach to reducing violence in the schools and the community and to raising healthy children (PRYSE proposal, 1999, p. 1).

In the Rockaways – with miles of ocean beachfront on the south, bay views on the north, many square miles of empty lots, abundant seagulls and a sometimes-complete lack of pedestrian traffic even during the day – there is a strong sense of the suburban in the urban, occasionally even the rural. Apart from a few commercial areas around the two largest subway stations (at Far Rockaway and Rockaway Park, see Fig. 2.1), most neighborhoods lack sidewalks, are filled with grass and trees, lack public pay phones and city trash receptacles, and are within view of the ocean or the bay. As the quote that opens this chapter proclaimed in 2010 in *New York* magazine, some parts of Rockaway, on the eastern end, are frequently likened to a post-apocalyptic scene by the media when they visit; sometimes even in the imaginations of the people who live there. A 2008 *New York Times* feature on “Living In” various New York City communities headlined Far

Rockaway as “Beaten Down, and Not Only by Nature” (Hughes, 2008). Occasionally, neutral or even positive headlines appear in the major New York papers, but one is more likely to see the words “revival,” “skepticism,” and “doubt.” There are relatively frequent headlines about youth violence and drownings on the beach.³⁶ It has been repeatedly described as a place of contrasts, beginning with the incongruity of finding striking ocean and Manhattan skyline views and plenty of open space still within the borders of the big city.

One feels as though one has left New York City altogether. As is evident in Figure 2.1, below, the natural barrier of Jamaica Bay separates the peninsula from Brooklyn and most of Queens, making it the most geographically isolated and remote section of the five boroughs. Even where the peninsula connects to southern Queens, at the northeastern end, the fenced-off expanses of John F. Kennedy International Airport create an additional barrier. Almost no traffic passes through the Rockaways on the way to other destinations. The roads to the Rockaways end there. Its well-defined boundaries, geographical separation and relatively low population density (outside the public housing developments) have contributed to residents’ sense of isolation and “created a fierce localism,” some of which is retained even today (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, p. 11).

³⁶ A Lexis-Nexis search reveals 1142 documents containing the phrase “Far Rockaway” between June 1, 2000 (when PRYSE officially started work) and December 31, 2004 (when it technically ended). A search within results reveals that 224 – about 20 percent – contain the words “violence OR murder OR homicide OR kill.”



Figure 2.1 Contemporary Map of the Rockaway Peninsula Within which PRYSE took place (adapted from Klein, 2010)

NOTE: The inset (top left) shows the route of the A train from Manhattan. Once in Rockaway, the subway line splits into two legs, one going east toward Far Rockaway and one west as far as Rockaway Park. Also, note the leg of the Long Island Rail Road entering a short way into Far Rockaway from the east (Nassau County).

An 11-mile stretch of land at the southeastern edge of Queens with an average width of about a mile, the Rockaway peninsula and neighboring Broad Channel were home to slightly more than 106,000 New Yorkers in the 2000 Census, with the city's highest proportion of children (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003).³⁷ Before the early 1950s, Rockaway was a recreational destination for New Yorkers of all classes who had the means to make the trip.³⁸ Between the 1950s and today, Rockaway experienced a marked economic decline, and although in recent years some thought it was poised to recover the economic potentials it wielded long ago, the recent financial crises have cast a cloud over such hopes, and what was accomplished during the housing boom resembles

³⁷ Although Broad Channel is combined with the peninsula through a shared zip code, school district and community board, this case study does not cover this most inhabited of the islands on Jamaica Bay, as it was not included in the PRYSE project.

³⁸ Rockaway is a translation of the name given to the place by the Canarsie Indian residents of the land, first documented in the 1630s; most agree that it means "sand place" (Tooker, 1962).

overdevelopment more than revitalization.³⁹ In fact, some worry that the problems of the past are recurring, as will be explored below. To appreciate the contemporary situation, and the recent historical context in which this case study took place, we need first to travel to the peninsula, and then back into its history. This chapter briefly reviews that history dating back to the Rockaways' heyday as a popular summer resort (loaded with seasonal bungalows built in the 1800s) with a year-round community of about 40,000 residents.⁴⁰ Later sections delve into demographic data about the people and neighborhoods gathered during the PRYSE project.⁴¹

Traveling to the Rockaways

Long before professional social science work brought me there starting in the late 1990s, I acquired my original view of the Rockaways in the course of many visits to the peninsula in my youth. I grew up in Western Queens in the 1970s. Each summer, thousands of teenagers made the journey by public transportation to 116th Street – Rockaway Beach – for what we'd later learn was dangerous sun worship, as well as easy access to intoxication through legal and illegal substances. Rockaway Beach, and the slow journey by the Q53 public bus, or the A train, was popularized on a small scale by the Ramones' successful release of the eponymous song in 1977. Although we didn't know it then, we were, in fact, fulfilling the vision of Robert Moses, who during his tenure had envisioned Rockaway as a right and public good for day-trippers from the rest

³⁹ However, some argue that this new development will not gentrify these areas of the peninsula because the housing is being built on empty lots and so will not displace current low-income residents (see Lennard, 2009).

⁴⁰ For the most detailed history of the peninsula available, see Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003.

⁴¹ In subsequent chapters we shall have much further occasion to consider reflections on the Rockaways from adults and youth I worked with and interviewed during my six years of active social research on the peninsula.

of New York City. Many people of all ages traveled to the Rockaway boardwalk to enjoy the beach, some clams, or an ice cream near the sea. Youth from the more affluent sections of Queens made the journey to purchase substances not available in their own neighborhoods, in \$5 and \$10 bags from dealers just off the boardwalk. Youth of all classes flocked to the ocean side, sometimes visiting the Rockaways' Playland Amusement Park on Beach 98th Street, which closed its gates in 1985 after 86 years in operation, replaced by a 300-unit condominium complex. The closing of Playland was iconic for many, and feared as the final nail in a long, slowly built coffin that over the course of the 20th century brought the Rockaways from a position of strength to one of weakness.

The longest subway line in New York City, the A train, begins its 31-mile journey in Inwood, at the northernmost tip of Manhattan, and traverses almost the entire north-to-south length of New York's most storied island, stopping at 29 stations on its way downtown through Harlem and the Upper West Side to Midtown and Lower Manhattan. The train turns left and west, crossing Manhattan and tunneling under the East River to Brooklyn. After a few stops in Downtown Brooklyn, it emerges above ground to an elevated line built about a century ago. It crosses the borough's full width, making 17 stops along miles of tracks that run between apartment buildings in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Ocean Hill-Brownsville, until it enters southern Queens. After a few more stops in Ozone Park, the train takes a long right turn, due south, through Howard Beach. On one side we see Aqueduct Racetrack, on the other JFK airport. Finally we embark on the long crossing over the waters of Jamaica Bay and the island of Broad Channel, on a

bridge with dozens of uninhabited swampy islets to either side, on our way at last to Rockaway.

On reaching the peninsula, the A train splits. One leg turns northeast and runs six stops, back in the direction of the airport, before terminating at Far Rockaway, the eastern-most and also one of the poorest neighborhoods on the Rockaway peninsula. Far Rockaway borders on a highly affluent community, also named Inwood, one of the Five Towns just across the border to Nassau County.⁴² The other leg of the A train, when operating, runs southwest for four stops, ending about halfway down the peninsula's length at the Rockaway Park/Beach 116th Street terminus.⁴³ Beyond that, traffic to the more prosperous western-most precincts is by car or irregular bus.

Starting from downtown Manhattan, a trip to the Rockaways may require as many as three hours in one direction, as the A train suffers infrequent but regular delays. An average trip takes ninety minutes. More reliable and less crowded, the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) also enters the peninsula, from the northeastern end, where the Rockaways attach to Nassau County. The LIRR fare from Manhattan is about double the MTA's for the luxury, one in which I indulged repeatedly during my years of work and research. On some days, I would be the only passenger exiting the LIRR train at Far Rockaway, last stop on the line.

The peninsula's south shore consists of miles of sandy beachfront, with striking views of the ocean. Almost no matter where you are, you can catch views of Jamaica Bay to the north and, to the west, distant glimpses of the Manhattan skyline. Many empty lots remain, despite the early 2000s development boom. As mentioned earlier,

⁴² Long Island's "Five Towns" are an informal grouping of towns within neighboring Hempstead in southern Nassau County and include Cedarhurst, Hewlett, Inwood, Lawrence, and Woodmere.

⁴³ The A train to Rockaway Park is replaced by a shuttle train during all times outside rush hours.

most streets lack sidewalks, a rarity for New Yorkers, and are filled with grass, trees and weeds. The seagulls overhead and the sparse pedestrian traffic, with almost no one on the streets at night, all contribute to that feeling of having left the City behind. Around the main subway stops at Far Rockaway and Rockaway Park, the commercial areas that typically surround New York train stations are unusually small. Most neighborhoods lack bodegas, city trash receptacles and even fast-food restaurants. The youth in the focus groups that I conducted, and analyze in subsequent chapters, bemoaned the same lack of movie theaters, bowling alleys and malls on the peninsula that the PRYSE application also emphasized as a problem. There are 170 acres of beach from Beach 3rd to Beach 149th Streets, providing a local recreational option during summer months for swimming, sunbathing and surfing; although with non-unionized life guards and a severely limited Parks budget, New York City has one of the highest youth drowning rates nationally. The recent development, Arverne-by-the-Sea, called the “most improbable new neighborhood” in New York City in the pages of *The New Yorker* (Nobel, 2010), is bringing a large supermarket, a YMCA and a small retail strip near the subway line. It remains to be seen to what extent, if any, these changes will benefit the community as a whole, or only the people who have moved into the new oceanfront development.

Researching the Rockaways

Rockaway is actually many places, many neighborhoods in one barrier island.⁴⁴ Some neighborhoods on the peninsula are lined with million-dollar homes – particularly on the Western end in Belle Harbor and Neponsit, but also in the new development of Arverne-by-the-Sea. Some are continuous blocks of public housing developments – especially in Edgemere, Arverne and Far Rockaway on the Eastern end. Working and middle class residents are dispersed throughout many of these neighborhoods, while a few, especially Breezy Point at the Western tip, have maintained their exclusivity for decades, an example of what Taylor (2003), following Suttles (1972) calls “the dark side” of community, or one aspect of Wacquant’s (1998) negative social capital: the exclusion of outsiders.

My association as a social researcher on the Rockaway peninsula began in 1998, two years after the two largest project housing developments on the peninsula – then called Arverne and Edgemere Houses, now combined under the name of Ocean Bay – were awarded a \$68 million dollar federal public housing revitalization grant under the HOPE VI program.⁴⁵ Having been involved in numerous projects as a research assistant and Sociology graduate student at the City University of New York, I was well-placed to join a team that would create, implement and analyze a random sample survey of the

⁴⁴ There are five zip codes covering the Rockaways. The eastern-most neighborhood, in 11691, is Far Rockaway and neighboring Edgemere. The 11692 zip code includes Arverne and Somerville. Broad Channel, just north of the peninsula, as well as Hammels comprises 11693. The neighborhoods known as Rockaway Park, Seaside, Belle Harbor and Neponsit comprise 11694. Finally, at the western most point of the peninsula is the community of Breezy Point, as well as Fort Tilden, Roxbury and Jacob Riis Park in 11697.

⁴⁵ HOPE stands for “Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere.” HOPE VI began in 1992 as “a new and comprehensive approach” to address the myriad problems identified in the 86,000 of the 1.3 million public housing units nationwide identified as “severely distressed.” The program “combined grants for physical revitalization with funding for management improvements and supportive services to promote resident self-sufficiency” (Popkin, et al., 2004, p. 1).

residents of those housing developments, to assist the HOPE VI implementation in prioritizing changes and services.⁴⁶ Although many on the peninsula would echo the words of one of my interviewees in 2003 – that HOPE VI in Rockaway had been a “great failure” – the revitalization initiative was and remains one of the largest infusions of federal dollars to the area. It sought to improve the quality of life for the peninsula’s public housing residents, many of whom would come to participate in the PRYSE programs the following year.⁴⁷

My professional work for HOPE VI led directly to my involvement in the next CCI to come to the peninsula, PRYSE. During the six years in which I was employed as a research consultant on the peninsula, I was involved in four distinct yet overlapping federally initiated projects pursuing comprehensive and community-based partnership activities to address a variety of social problems within mainly black and Latino, low- and middle- income neighborhoods in the Rockaways. (I was also involved in a further such project in Staten Island.)⁴⁸ The common thread uniting all of these projects was the mandate to bring together multiple governmental agencies, non-profits, neighborhood

⁴⁶ One of the researchers on the HOPE survey team became a Principal Investigator on the PRYSE local evaluation team and invited me to participate in PRYSE as a research assistant. We met because we were both within the relational network of the lead contact to the private contractor hired to manage the HOPE project. That same contact would make Brenda Z. aware of SS/HS as a funding opportunity, leading directly to the PRYSE grant application (see Chapter 3).

⁴⁷ It should be noted however that they did so with expressions of anger at having been excluded from the PRYSE application and planning process, as PRYSE only came to public light with the first meeting to announce that the federal funding had already been secured (see Chapter 3). Such frustrations of people involved in funding-driven partnerships, as well as their persistent and energetic participation in the face of those frustrations and other obstacles, are well-documented in the academic and applied study of government and community partnerships (Stern & Green, 2005).

⁴⁸ The four Rockaway projects were HOPE VI, PRYSE, Healthy Communities Access Project (HCAP) and Weed & Seed. Various sections of this dissertation are devoted to each of these. From 2003 to 2006 I was also involved in another community-wide coalition as a program evaluator and research consultant in Staten Island. This came about thanks to my participation in the CtC-inspired “prevention science” program training offered to PRYSE by the New York State Office of Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), via priorities expressed as funding opportunities through SAMHSA. I was very fairly compensated for my work in all five of these projects. As with any case study, my observations and analysis here are limited to my field of vision. The data I gathered in the Rockaways is delimited by the years of active observational field research skill I brought to the process, as well as the access I had to respondents.

residents and sometimes philanthropic and corporate interests to obtain funding in support of a “seamless web” or “one-stop shopping” (as Brenda Z. often called it) approach to the myriad difficulties faced by people living in low-income urban neighborhoods, in one of the five most populated cities in the world.

Of course, comprehensive community partnerships in a place like Rockaway are neither unique nor taking place in a vacuum. Although Rockaway is in some ways an unusual case – a place that appears to be a beachfront town and an urban landscape at once – it is also a place that is emblematic and familiar to those working within the academic and applied fields of urban community change and the partnership approach to securing that change. About one-third of the peninsula is a target for frequent government and non-profit interventions, and Rockaway neighborhoods struggle with the same social problems as in other low-income, geographically isolated and resource-poor communities. While PRYSE at times involved 15 public schools across the peninsula and in both of its police precincts, the most economically well-off and whitest neighborhoods were never truly a part of it, except that some of the Coalition members also lived in those neighborhoods; but the programs initiated by the PRYSE partners were not really intended for the children of those neighborhoods.

Heydays and Eventual Decline - A Brief History

The distant history of the Rockaways matters to this research first of all because it matters to the people who live there. Rockaway residents of all classes with whom I interacted over the years know their history, especially the residents of the public housing developments who are active in tenant leadership activities. Part of that awareness comes from pride in the community in which they live, as it was represented to me; part of it comes from a deep anger and resentment at what many see as a policy-driven and neglectful governmental stance towards the most burdened neighborhoods of the peninsula. Regardless of what explains the historical perspective possessed by many of the residents I knew, the history matters to this case study as it offers a lens on how the present in which the study unfolded was preceded by decades of colonization, development, city planning, city policy and a market economy that didn't reap consistent benefits in every neighborhood.

The Rockaways were once a popular vacation destination for many New Yorkers with publicists highlighting the crowding of Brooklyn's Coney Island as one of the many draws of New York City's other affordable beach (Harmon & Becker, 2004). The first hotels opened in Far Rockaway in the 1830s. The opening of a fashionable hotel in 1833 helped to draw influential guests such as the Vanderbilts, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Washington Irving (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003; Wave, n.d.). In the 1830s, a group of wealthy New Yorkers began purchasing land in Rockaway rapidly, fleeing an outbreak of cholera. In the decades to follow, and with ferry service introduced, the peninsula grew into a beachfront resort town (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d., ii). By 1880 railroad lines provided access across Jamaica Bay.

By 1925, the Cross Bay Boulevard provided access permitting automobiles to reach the peninsula, although “the two-lane road was inadequate from the day it opened” (Kroessler, 2007, p. 171). By the 1930s and 1940s, a year-round population included Irish Americans, Jews and African American residents. These groups did not live in harmony, and it seems that summer visitors also brought a regular increase in social tensions (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003; E.B., 1853). During this time, lower-middle-class and working-class summer visitors were more common than the wealthy of an earlier era. Some argue that air conditioning and air travel, by providing other options to the wealthier, contributed to the changing demographics of visitors to the peninsula (Hughes, 2008).

In the following decades, even as the populations of urban areas nationwide were declining, the Rockaways gained “inhabitants at an amazing rate” so that by the 1950s, both white and black New Yorkers were moving in (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, p. 75). While Rockaway did not reflect the “white flight” taking place in other American cities during this era, within a decade a combination of red lining, urban renewal and welfare department policy would change a portion of the peninsula’s landscape in lasting ways. But to arrive at that part of the story, we must first consider the racism, discrimination and segregation that had begun decades earlier.

The Rockaways of the past were segregated, although not in quite the same way as they are today. From the late seventeenth century, the Cornell (University-founding) family estate in Far Rockaway used slave labor. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, institutions from movie theaters to parochial schools excluded black citizens from participation (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003). Residential segregation

documented during the World War I era persists in some of the exact same areas of the peninsula today. Although many New Yorkers visited the beaches for summer heat relief, for decades into the 1900s African Americans were not among them. Residential segregation in recent decades includes many more groups than populated the peninsula back then, including an influx of Latino immigrants, mostly from Central and South America.

No discussion of New York City neighborhoods from the 1930s forward is complete without consideration of the “Power Broker” Robert Moses. Although Moses’ biographer Robert Caro did not include much about it in his famous book, Moses “played the single most important role in determining the fate of the peninsula” for three decades, beginning with the “Rockaway Improvement” of the late 1930s (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, p. 13). The project was completed in time for the opening of the 1939 World’s Fair. Among the changes made were the introduction of the Marine Parkway Bridge to increase automobile access to the peninsula (renamed the Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge in 1978); the creation of new public bus lines to the renovated Jacob Riis Park; expansion and improvement of the Cross Bay Bridge (once the only car-accessible roadway and inadequate to meet increasing summer traffic); and the demolition of what Moses “called the worst seaside slum in the City” – the area from Beach 73rd Street to Beach 108th Street – and its replacement with a shore parkway, playgrounds and a new boardwalk (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, pp. 19 – 20; Kroessler, 2007).⁴⁹ It would be the first of many demolitions of blocks of properties, but did not contribute to stagnation and neglect as did the razings that came later with the promise of “urban renewal.”

⁴⁹ See Kroessler, 2007 for greater details of the Rockaway Improvement.

The New York City Department of Welfare was also very instrumental in shaping the population and ultimately, some of the decline, of the Rockaways, but not the whole peninsula, and not without other forces operating simultaneously. During the 1940s and 1950s, Rockaway began to see a great change in available housing and in population. In 1948, Raymond Hilliard was appointed NYC's Commissioner of Welfare. Among the other activities in which he engaged during his tenure, Hilliard gained notoriety with his 1951 *Saturday Evening Post* article, "We Threw the Commies Out." He saw many of his caseworkers as "wasters" and purged them from the Welfare Department. Early in his tenure, and in this climate, he announced plans for the former summer houses of Rockaway, which had previously been used to house veterans, now to be filled with welfare clients. In 1949, he presented a plan to the Rockaway Chamber of Commerce whereby people on welfare in the City would be placed permanently, or in the winter, in housing on the Rockaway peninsula that had once been bungalows and beach rooming houses for summer visitors (all this, of course, without any winterizing of the available properties). Single parents with young children, as well as people considered unemployable, were sent to the peninsula, as they were not expected to find work; and given the steady decline of manufacturing jobs throughout the city, along with the already isolated nature of the peninsula, very few of them ever would.

While the Welfare Department denied it played a role in finding housing for clients of welfare services, numerous statements of the commissioner himself contradict this claim, and in fact verify that Hilliard acted to house thousands of poor African Americans, many who had just arrived from the south, and many with severe mental and physical health difficulties, to the then under-populated and remote Rockaway peninsula

(Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003). Hilliard explained his selection of the peninsula as reasonable given that “it would be preferable for those families with employable persons to live in areas more accessible to places of employment” (Hilliard as cited in Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, p. 57).

At Hammels in the early 1950s, the mostly African American and Puerto Rican families living there were relocated, and new families receiving public assistance moved into newly constructed low-income housing called Hammel Houses, while nearby streets were deteriorating (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003). Beginning in the late 1950s, the area of Edgemere and Arverne – approximately 310 acres along the ocean – would meet the same fate as Hammels. Arverne, between Beach 56th to Beach 79th Streets, was an Urban Renewal site and most of the substandard housing was bulldozed in 1964. That space sat empty for the next forty years until its purchase and building by private developers.

Consensus exists that the Rockaways today evidence this “harsh transformation” in the decades after the Second World War (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003, p. 1). But depending on whether one speaks with current middle class homeowners, members of white Christian or Jewish congregations, African American homeowners or public housing residents, the view of the past and present differs. While many residents of the more exclusive neighborhoods romanticize a lost Rockaway, their view avoids the realities of race and class that played a defining role in that past, and thereby, as Kaplan and Kaplan found, “ignore the negative features of their dominant culture” (p. 181). As we shall see, it took three years around the table at the PRYSE steering committee for the

word “race” to be mentioned publicly (although our ministerial representative would quite often remind us of class differences, carefully never mentioning race outright).

Although these different perspectives on the same reality compete in everyday life and media depictions, there are facts about which few disagree. With such a high percentage of children growing into young adults, the peninsula provides seriously inadequate opportunities for recreation, but equally (or more) importantly, for employment. The Kaplans go so far as to conclude, at the end of their well-researched history, that “idle youth without hope represent Rockaway’s major problem” (p. 182), a consistent view that I also found among the concerned adults working towards improving their neighborhoods, as well as the young people in my focus groups. As one adult focus group participant said:

The kids here are not living, they are existing, and this is what people need to have addressed. The kids are making babies – there is nothing else to do.

My findings in Rockaway overlapped the Kaplans’ in other important ways. They note, in 2003, that former and present residents were justified in laying much blame for the peninsula’s very urban problems on outside forces (p. 183). In keeping with Massey and Denton’s well-known 1993 description of American segregation, a remote area was compounded by policies and market forces that created a level of socioeconomic isolation in which generations continue to live, albeit with a strong black middle class of residents and community activists working to shift that tide.

The Peninsula in the 2000s

During my interviews and paid research work in Rockaway, I would repeatedly hear reference to the ways that the “City fathers” created the “mess” that residents of the Eastern end of the peninsula in particular were living with and were often asked to help clean up, by their own estimation. Reading the local paper, *The Wave*, and reading other news articles or online sources about the Rockaways reveals that this explanation of how Rockaway became a place of contrasts and deep, enduring poverty is widely agreed upon in the popular imagination, as well as in scholarly circles. In fact, in most recent times, residents and politicians alike report a growing concern that the old pattern of burdening an already overburdened community might be happening all over again. Rockaway has the highest percentage of adult nursing homes and adult homes for the mentally ill in the City, in part due to its relatively cheap land and low density. This in and of itself is not necessarily burdensome. However, it is an indication of a place that has not had the political clout or support either to stave off an overabundance of residents who will not contribute to the economic life of a place that badly needs it, or to provide the assets that these new residents need to do more than survive (although it is at least true that some residents have found employment opportunities in these facilities).

Today the peninsula also finds itself with many empty homes and condos from the recent 2000s building boom that went bust in the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the US economic crisis that continues as of this publication. Unable to sell seaside luxury condos or even poorly-built but more affordable one- and two-family homes, some of these private developers, like the summer housing owners of Rockaway past, are contracting with the City to become renters to homeless families leaving the shelter

system. Such a move must not necessarily overburden a neighborhood, but in this case owners are neglecting even basic maintenance responsibilities, repeating the same pattern that helped to create the depression of Rockaway for the decades between 1940 and 1990 (Schwarzfeld, 2008). An influx of formerly homeless people is a challenge to neighborhoods that offer few resources for those who live there, and even less for those with greater socioeconomic need.

During my time with PRYSE on the peninsula, people were just beginning to become frustrated and vocal about what they saw as overdevelopment. People consistently complained that the housing being built was “cheap.” By 2008, Schwarzfeld, a journalist, would interview residents and politicians who said some of the housing was not only of poor quality but had the potential to create dangerous conditions for residents and neighbors. According to interviews that Schwarzfeld conducted, shoddy workmanship had led to problems such as a cracked septic tank in a building less than 2 years old, leaving the residents without clean water. My interviewees were frustrated in the early 2000s with these “houses made of cardboard,” as one young man put it in a focus group, reporting on the consensus of the adults in his life. By 2008, as Schwarzfeld reported, the Rockaway peninsula would, through the work of residents, local politicians and activists, demand rezoning to protect remaining “emblematic oceanside bungalows,” to minimize out of character development and to correct outdated zoning regulations from 1961 that didn’t restrict height or setback of new buildings (also see “City Planning Proposal,” 2008 for details of the plan).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Schwarzfeld published his report in June, 2008 and the City Council approved the rezoning changes in August, 2008.

The current prevailing view of Rockaway is that it remains to be seen what benefits might accrue from all the recent new development and contextual rezoning. One fact highlighted by the real estate interests and the Chamber of Commerce, but less often noted in even critical media on the subject of overdevelopment, is that Arverne-By-The-Sea and other recent condominiums and homes come with a 10 to 25-year tax abatement. These may continue to draw middle-class homeowners, although a recent *New York Times* article reports that sales are so slow in one Arverne development that the corporation that owns the units is offering a year of waived maintenance fees and free 42-inch flat-screen televisions to prospective buyers, but not with brisk success (Buckley, 2010). However, tax abatement also means that the people who move in do not add to funding for public services in New York City. This has an indirect effect on the other residents in the Rockaways, as in a district that has such a high percentage of children, the City's budget shortfalls have and will continue to impact available services. In 2009, the Madison Square Boys and Girls Club of Far Rockaway closed after 14 years of providing after-school activities because the New York City Housing Authority could no longer offer to give them space without charging rent. A few other nonprofits in the area offer after-school programming, but they may not make up for the loss of Madison Square.

But other signs of possibility exist. The Rockaway Waterfront Alliance, a non-profit created in 2003 when a local resident saw that much of that new development was proceeding with little regard for current residents, has been successful in preserving waterfront for use as public parkland, receiving \$40 million from the City to "improve the boardwalk and adjacent parkland at Far Rockaway Beach between Beach 9th and 31st

Streets” (New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d., i). Renewed interest in the bungalows of Rockaway has included photo essays, a documentary and a Bungalow Preservation Society, although these are far removed from the life lived within and around the public housing developments. The once bustling 116th Street shopping strip was recently reported to have the highest proportion of abandoned retail storefronts of any shopping district in Queens (Haughney, 2009). But the Arverne developments should bring some retail, with a potential for employment.

Demographics of the Rockaways

Within my first few weeks working on the Rockaway peninsula, the Reverend Cassius C., who participated in the PRYSE Coalition, was the first of many I heard say that there are at least “two Rockaways,” an idea introduced in an early meeting of the PRYSE Steering Committee. Awareness of this difference is acute in the culture of the people with whom I worked – young and old alike. Their cultural perception was borne out in quantitative data that clearly show steep gradations of ethnoracial, class and educational distinctions on the peninsula, moving from the white, more affluent and higher educational attainment on the Western end to the less affluent, black and Latino Eastern end, where a higher percentage of people are without high school and college degrees. Although people already knew these empirical facts without seeing them in numbers, our data gathering was critical to the evaluation because we knew that without such tools, we could not assist in producing reports to satisfy the federal government and potential funders who would be persuaded only by the perception such data create about given communities and potential project impacts.

The participants of PRYSE therefore requested that the evaluators present mapped data to help understand the demographics of the Rockaways, especially for use in presentations at meetings both on and off the peninsula. This followed the strong suggestion of the PRYSE project manager, Brenda Z., and the head of the mediation services group, Josh K., the two participants in PRYSE most likely to be in positions of understanding the value of quantitative data for advancing the Coalition's mission (as these types of data were equally important for advancing missions within their respective own organizations). The Evaluation Team decided to use the SS/HS categorizations of priorities: We gathered data about education, adult and youth crime, and health. We contracted to have eleven maps crafted from Census 2000 data. These showed percent children in poverty; percent Hispanic; percent Black; location of child care and youth services; percent age 18 and under; an overlay of public housing and public schools; percent in poverty; percent non-white; percent people on probation; percent jail admissions; and an overlay of public housing on those jail admissions. With a combination of archival data, data from our 3-year community survey, focus groups and interviews with PRYSE partners, we painted an empirically-based portrait of the peninsula.

Although as a Coalition, we at PRYSE almost never spoke openly about race, and although ethnoracial distinctions were mentioned only once and briefly in the original PRYSE proposal of 1999– “the population is dominated by low income minority residents, an increasing number of whom are Hispanic” – the Evaluation Team decided to present our maps with more specific data of the cultural distinctions on the ground. As Figure 2.2 makes obvious, the neighborhoods from Seaside to most of Far Rockaway are

predominantly the residences of African Americans and Latinos. The easternmost section of the peninsula, bordering Lawrence, is home to a large Orthodox Jewish community that grew between 1994 and 2004, and was drawn from Brooklyn by grass, trees and developers who accommodated the need for five- or six-bedroom homes and countered the potential negative association of “Far Rockaway” by calling the area a fictitious, but persistent “West Lawrence.” A growing Latino population lives in different tracts than African Americans and Caribbean blacks, as can be seen when comparing Figure 2.2, the percent Black map, with Figure 2.3, percent Hispanic. It should be noted that the language of ethnoracial categories we employed lacks for precision, even in the evaluation, in describing the complicated landscape of communities living in Rockaway. While we used, and I am repeating, the short-form Census categories of “Latino,” “Hispanic,” “white” and “black,” the reality is that there are cultural distinctions that matter deeply to the residents, and often define for them their identities: Russian, Orthodox Jewish, Guatemalan, Jamaican, Irish, Italian, Haitian, Polish and African are some of the larger groups by ancestry, as reported in the 2000 Census, but also brought to life each day by residents, then and now.

The black population of the peninsula (42.2%) is much higher than in Queens overall (19.8%) or in New York City (26.4%), while the Latino population is even larger in other parts of the City. (However the PRYSE proposal acknowledged that residents of the peninsula believe the Latino population is larger than it appears in official data, because of a significant undocumented community.) The Western peninsula is home to Breezy Point, a cooperative run by its residents. It is a gated community with the distinction of a 98.5 percent white population, prompting the *New York Times* to call it

“the whitest neighborhood in the city” (Scott, et al, 2001, p. A1). The largest ethnic group among whites is Irish, at 53 percent, followed by Italian, with 15 percent, and German, 7 percent (Hughes, 2008).

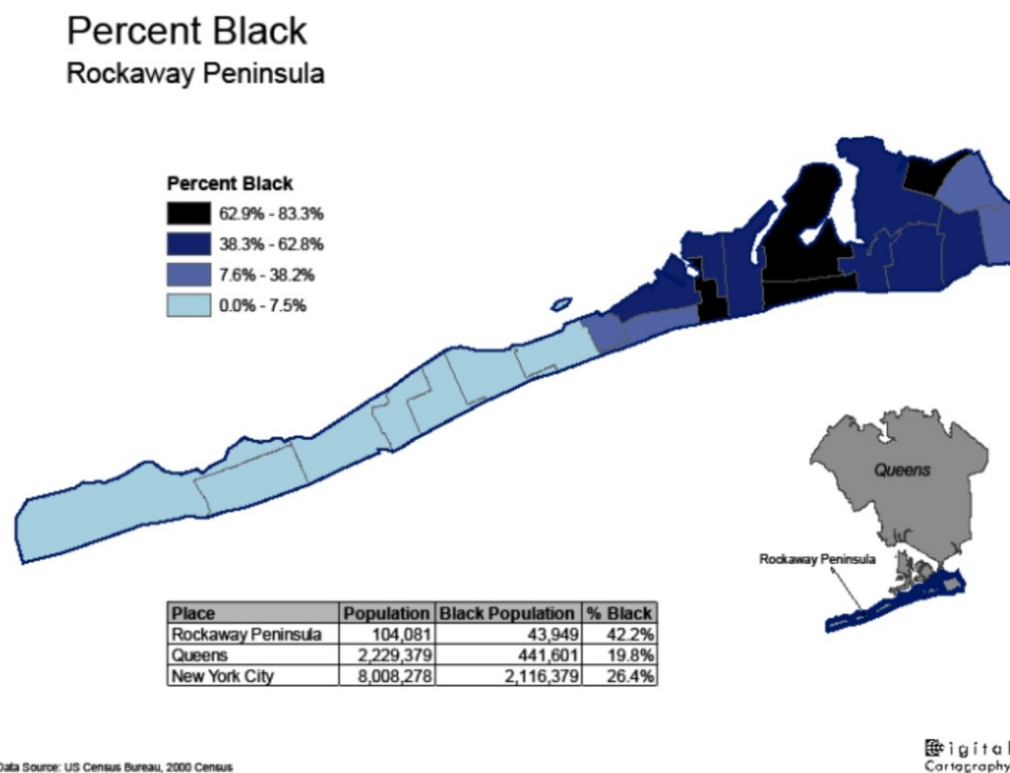
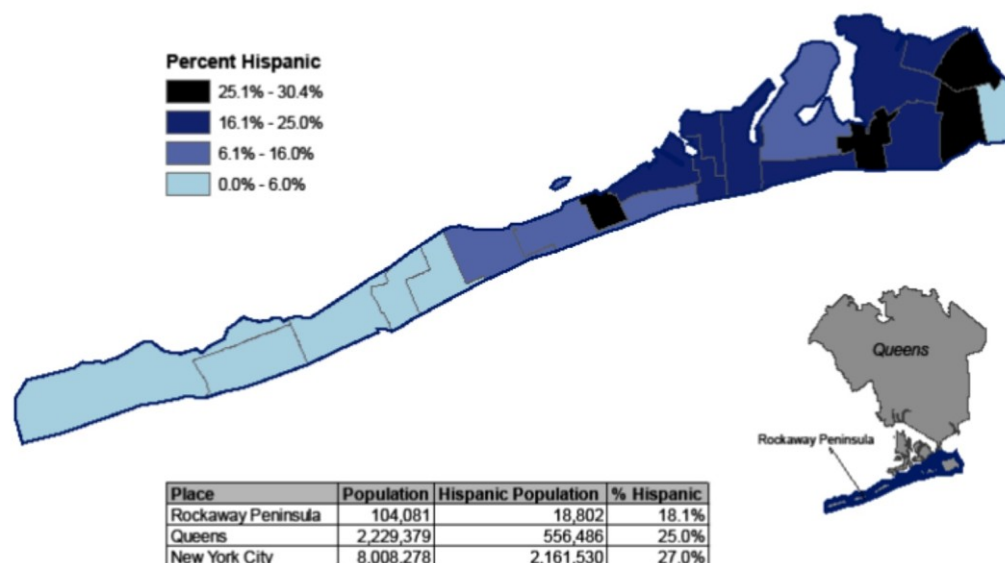


Figure 2.2: Percent of Black Residents of Rockaway Peninsula, 2002

Percent Hispanic Rockaway Peninsula



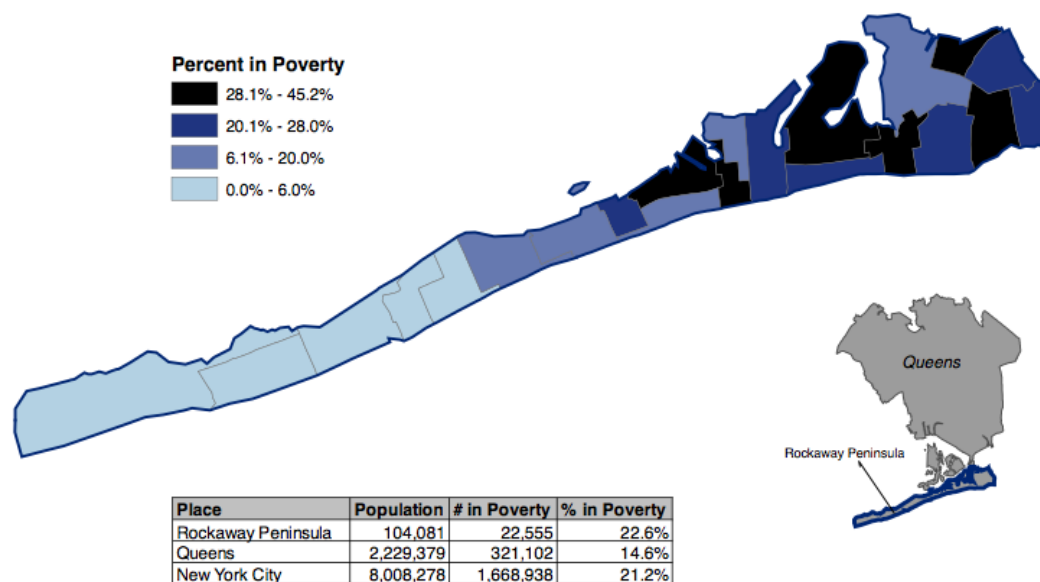
Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Digital
Cartography

Figure 2.3: Percent Hispanic Residents of Rockaway Peninsula, 2002

The maps we contracted confirmed that in 2002, a higher percentage of youth 18 and under were living in Rockaway (29.9%) than in Queens (24%) or New York City as a whole (25.4%). The data also revealed that 28.5% of children in Rockaway were living in poverty in the year 2000, compared to 19.2% in Queens and 30.3% in New York City; although the PRYSE proposal, using 1998 data from the NYC Administration for Children’s Services, put the Rockaway figure at 41%. The overall proportion in poverty in 2000 for Rockaway residents (22.6%) was higher than for New York City (21.2%) and for Queens (14.6%).

Percent in Poverty Rockaway Peninsula



Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Digital
Cartography

Figure 2.4: Percent Residents in Poverty of Rockaway Peninsula, 2002

A handful of PRYSE participants, and this evaluator, were concerned that no re-entry services were present on a peninsula that they believed had a higher than average re-entry population. The 2002 mapped data indicated that based on the total population, the peninsula had a higher percentage of probationers (.67%) than Queens (.46%) and slightly higher than New York City (.63%), as well as a higher percentage of jail admissions (1.52%) than the borough (.62%) or the city as a whole (1.34%) (see Chapter 5, especially Figures 5.1 and 5.2). We also knew from anecdotal and archival sources

that the neighborhoods of the 101st Precinct had more than twice as many arrests as the 100th Precinct; Figure 2.5 shows the precinct boundaries.



Figure 2.5: Boundaries of 101st and 102nd NYPD Precincts (University Neighborhood Housing Program [UNHP], 2000)

Figure 2.6 shows the change over time in index crime complaints (read: arrests) in the decade leading up to the PRYSE project.

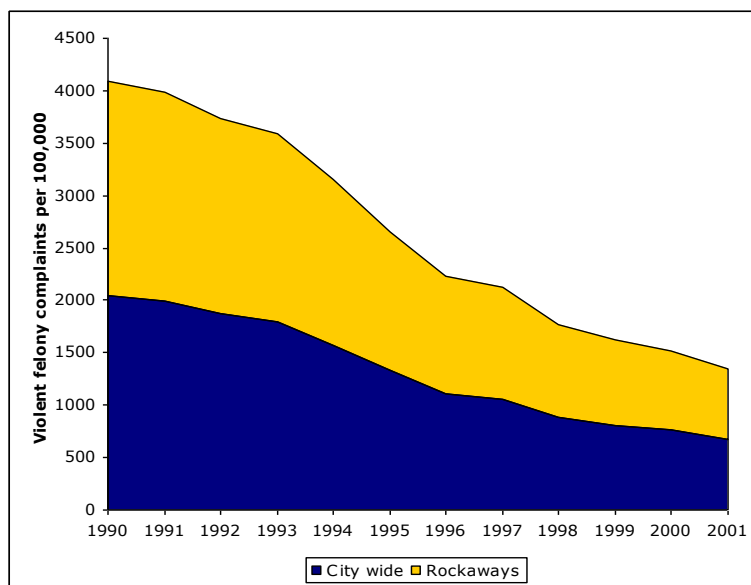


Figure 2.6. Violent Felony Arrests in Rockaway & Citywide, 1990-2001 (PRYSE, 2002)

In addition to the archival data, we conducted a random digit-dial telephone survey of residents, oversampling households with children (seven out of ten households lived with at least one child under 18). The PRYSE Coalition, taking its cue from the Evaluation Team, knew that no survey had been done on the peninsula that could make claims to representation since the HOPE VI survey, which was limited to Arverne and Edgemere. And although the community members I met would often express the sense that they had been “studied to death” and that the only money they ever saw was going to people doing research about the people that needed resources, we were able to survey slightly more than 900 people each year for three years from 2001 to 2003. Each year, over half of the respondents to the survey were people who reported that they had lived in the Rockaways for 15 years or more. Thirty-five to forty-five percent of respondents identified their race as African American; sixteen to nineteen percent said they were of Hispanic origin; about seventy percent were women; and the average age was about forty. Because households with children were oversampled, about half of respondents lived in the easternmost area of the peninsula. About 60% were renters and the majority of them were not receiving public assistance for that housing.

Our intent with these data was to assist the Coalition with focusing its resources (although PRYSE had little power to alter the original funding plan, if at all); seeking other funding opportunities; and crafting measurable outcomes based on the types of programs the partners had developed. To begin, we asked survey respondents to name the most important health and safety issues facing children and teens in the area. Rockaway residents consistently named drug abuse and drug dealing first in all three years, although the percentage of people choosing that response changed significantly

over time, from 39% in 2001 to 27% in 2003 (PRYSE, 2003). We also asked respondents living in households with children to name the most important services or programs needed for children and teenagers in the community. Recreation and after-school programs competed for first place over the three years.

At the beginning of the PRYSE project, 11.5% of respondents had heard about the Coalition; by the last official year of funding, this figure had increased to 15.8% (PRYSE, 2003). We included the widely used “social capital” measure of trust in the community, as shown in Figure 2.7 below, which revealed that respondents were less trusting of their neighbors in general, although this perception declined over time.⁵¹

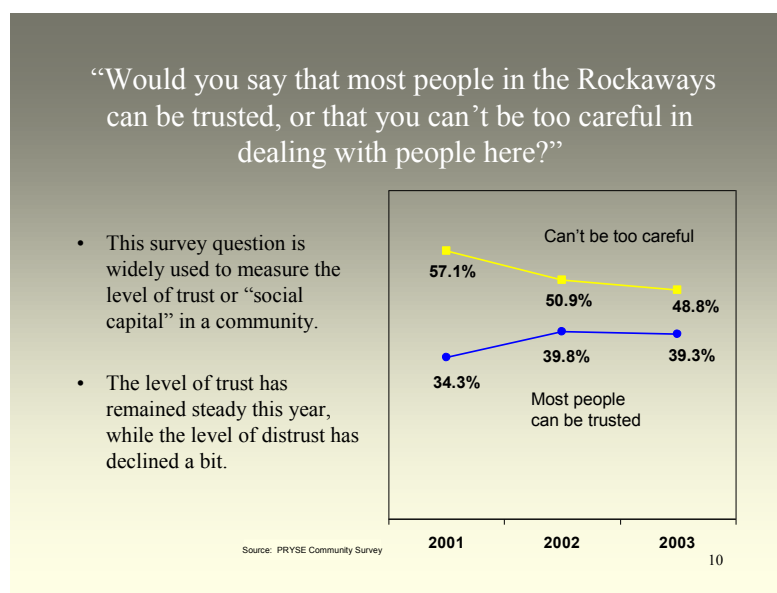


Figure 2.7: Social Capital in Rockaways Over Time (PRYSE, 2004)

Not presented to the community in our analysis was the finding that the responses to this question seem to indicate that, like Miller and Mitamura (2003), we may have

⁵¹ It is worth noting here that in 2003, this particular question was called into question for its validity. The question, originally part of a “faith in people scale” first used in 1956, has become a standard question in the General Social Survey since 1972. Miller and Mitamura (2003) found compelling evidence that this question, in isolation, may be a better measure of *caution* than trust.

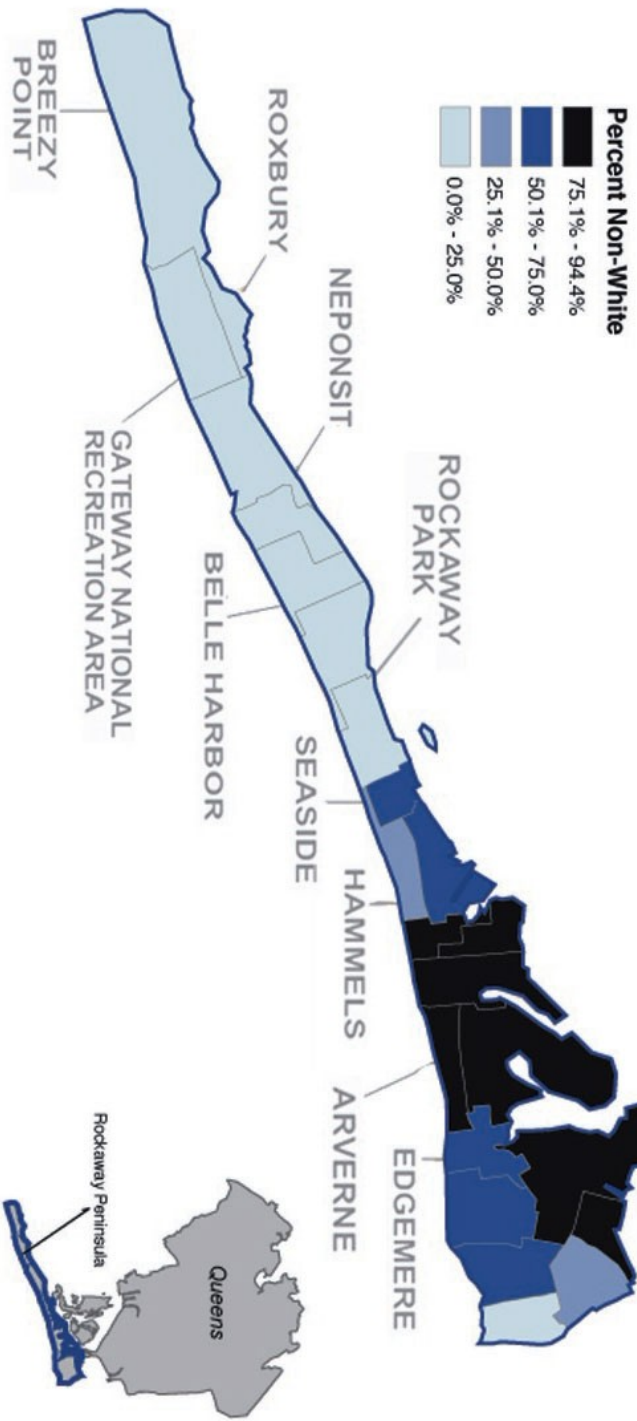
been measuring either caution or something more environmental than individual. They found “that differences in levels of safety in an environment strongly affect survey results” (p. 69). We found that white respondents were significantly more likely to report the perception of trusting other people. (Figure 2.8, two pages hence, presents a full-page map of the peninsula showing “Percent Non-White” in each area, with an overlay of the neighborhood names for use as a reference henceforth.) Similarly, feelings of safety in the respondent’s neighborhood as well as trust of the police were significantly different by race in ways we would have expected, with white residents demonstrating higher ratings of perceptions of safety and trusting the police “a lot.”

But there were more interesting findings to be drawn from these data than were made use of at the time. Statistically significant differences in feelings of safety and trust in the police were clear by race for higher income residents (\$35,000 or above) than for those reporting less than \$35,000. In short, residents report feeling less safe and having less trust in the police if they are low income, regardless of the race of the respondent. Only in the case of the “social capital” variable did we see statistically significant differences controlling for income, offering further evidence of the environmental influence and the notion that this variable may indicate caution: low-income black residents are much more likely than all other residents to say that you can’t be too careful with people in the Rockaways.

At a PRYSE Steering Committee meeting in 2003, during our presentation of the surveys conducted over the first three years of the initiative, the findings that set off the most controversy concerned questions about where parents send their children to school: In the Rockaways or not? To private or public schools? Another set of questions asked

parents of Rockaway public school students to rate the quality and safety of the peninsula schools that their children attended, as well as to consider some of the problems that PRYSE sought to address, such as fighting and bullying, drinking or using drugs, and travel to and from the schools. That meeting, that moment (covered in Chapter 5) was a watershed for the PRYSE Coalition, to the history of which we now turn.

Percent Non-White Rockaway Peninsula



| Place | Population | Non-White Population | % Non-White |
|--------------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Rockaway Peninsula | 104,081 | 59,807 | 57.5% |
| Queens | 2,229,379 | 1,246,794 | 55.9% |
| New York City | 8,008,278 | 4,431,226 | 55.3% |

Data Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census



Figure 2.8. “Percent Non-White” With Overlay of Rockaway Neighborhood Names

It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it.

(Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, 1906)

CHAPTER 3

The Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education

The Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education proposal for a grant from Safe Schools/Healthy Students was written in the weeks after the first SS/HS request for proposals was published in April 1999. The PRYSE effort was initiated by Gale Brewer, who would be elected to the City Council of New York a few years later from her home district in Manhattan.⁵² The application was submitted to the federal government on June 1, 1999.

Origins of PRYSE

At the time, Brewer was with Telesis Corporation, a contractor that “plans, finances and builds affordable housing” and maintains a non-profit arm in New York City. Telesis was selected in 1997 to manage the HOPE VI low-income housing

⁵² Brewer still represents the Manhattan neighborhoods of the Upper West Side and what most New Yorkers call “Hell’s Kitchen,” although real estate developers nowadays call it “Clinton.”

revitalization project at the Edgemere and Arverne Houses. HOPE VI was the first major federally initiated program on the peninsula in the 1990s, implemented in partnership with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). A HOPE VI planning grant originally had been awarded in 1993 for a different site, the development at Beach 41st Street in Far Rockaway, which NYCHA had selected “because it was among the most economically distressed sites in the city” (US General Accounting Office, 1998, p. 74). That plan ran into local opposition against the demolitions of existing units required by the federal authorities, and in 1996 the HOPE VI funding was shifted instead to the Edgemere-Arverne sites, with Telesis chosen as the manager the next year.⁵³

Several City University of New York faculty members were hired by Telesis in October 1998 to execute a survey of Edgemere and Arverne residents, intended in helping with HOPE VI planning.⁵⁴ From that group, the later PRYSE Evaluation Team would emerge. Brenda Z., who became the project manager of PRYSE, was also brought into the HOPE VI project via Brewer. Brenda Z. described the genesis of the PRYSE application as follows:

So there's a HOPE VI Project here in Rockaway and this was at some of the earlier stages. I was surprised that I hadn't heard about it earlier and I started making some noise, saying "I'm running these committees on the peninsula; we're providing services directly to this housing development. How come I don't know what's going on? I'd like to meet with somebody so we can talk about how we can be working together."

⁵³ The HOPE VI strategy included demolitions to make way for more mixed-income housing, although in the end this was not implemented in the Rockaways. Such requirements illustrated what one observer called “the hidden trap of 1990s federalism” (Nauer, 1997, para. 5). While New Federalism doctrines aim to devolve power to localities, in practice the federal government tends to mandate what must happen on the local end as a condition of funding (even in cases where the funding is relatively lower than in past programs), as noted in Chapter 1. Localities are left to negotiate with a powerful federal bureaucracy directly, without a state-level intermediary to which to turn.

⁵⁴ The results of that study on factors related to self-sufficiency were published in Van Ryzin, Ronda, Muzzio (2001). Our most noteworthy finding was that car ownership was among the most significant factors related to family economic self-sufficiency, even controlling for income and other potentially confounding effects.

Someone [Brewer] called and she and I hit it off right away. Since then she's become a council person for the city, not in our district, she lives in Manhattan, but she was such a welcome, wonderful, caring, energetic, brilliant lady and she learned about it through the Attorney General's office, through her connections there with about three weeks to go before the proposal went through. She said, "[Brenda], you're the only one I can think of to pull this off. Are you interested?" And she actually brought many of the parties together. I had the mental health people but she had all of these contacts. She contacted the school and the criminal justice people and we did it together. We got a whole group of people from the community together, everybody that we knew, sat down with everyone and we hammered this out. We hammered out together how we were going to approach this and the buy-in was incredible, absolutely incredible (Sanders, 2003).⁵⁵

An academically trained social worker, for many years Brenda Z. had been the administrator for community and mental health services at the Far Rockaway offices of "The Family Health Clinic," at the time the only federally-funded chain of health centers in Queens.⁵⁶ Brenda Z. and Gale Brewer led the process of writing and submitting the SS/HS grant proposal and, in the spring months of 1999, pulled together the original PRYSE Coalition of eleven member organizations.⁵⁷

The Family Health Clinic would become the lead organization in PRYSE. The Clinic's oft-stated purpose was to "empower community residents."⁵⁸ Its focus was on "one-stop shopping" for medical and other services, with the aim of providing additional

⁵⁵ The interview was conducted by Sanders, staff member at the SS/HS Action Center, then the communications arm of the project, in the course of promoting their work highlighting leadership at sites around the country.

⁵⁶ The names of PRYSE Coalition members as given here are mostly pseudonyms, and many of the organizations they represented have been fictionalized. Brewer, as an elected official, and other elected officials' names have not been changed. See Appendix B for a list and short bios of the key players. The story here of how PRYSE originated is mostly from an interview with Brenda Z. in 2004.

⁵⁷ Also instrumental in originating PRYSE was Mary O'Donoghue, at the time a Special Assistant to the US Attorney for the Eastern District and later a criminal and civil court judge. She brought in the New York Police Department and the Queens District Attorney's Office (QDA), with whom she was in regular contact thanks to her work with the Weed & Seed anti-crime initiative.

⁵⁸ In the mid-1980's a social service model called "family empowerment" became the reigning paradigm in mental health services for children and families (Heflinger & Nixon, 1996, 104-105).

“help” and “support” to the families who made use of the services. This assistance typically aims to ameliorate a variety of mostly poverty-driven but also racialized social problems, and includes help for parents of children in special education; help with housing; and treatments for emotional and behavioral problems, domestic violence, substance abuse and child abuse. While food and hunger would not be mentioned as issues in the context of PRYSE, several years later, when the Clinic started a different, health-focused initiative funded by a new federal program, it was found that the food pantry was the most used service at the Clinic’s (originally PRYSE-funded) Community Resource Center.

PRYSE Proposal and Organizational Structure

As we saw in Chapter 2, the PRYSE application to SS/HS opened with a “grim tale” of conditions in the Rockaways, portraying young people as affected drastically by poverty, gangs and drugs, and the threat of violence on the streets and at school. PRYSE proposed “a comprehensive multidimensional approach to reducing violence in the schools and the community and to raising healthy children.” Much of the language and theory was borrowed from the “risk-focused” or “preventive approach” paradigm based on research done by Hawkins and Catalano of the Social Development Research Group.⁵⁹

The PRYSE proposal articulated seven goals and objectives that the Coalition intended to achieve if funded:

1. Build a neighborhood network by developing a coalition of families, youth and service providers... to be the foundation of the network; to

⁵⁹ To reiterate from Chapter 1, the Hawkins/Catalano epidemiological approach to social problems influenced the shaping of SS/HS and ultimately was sold as a trademarked “social development strategy” to one of the SS/HS participating agencies, SAMHSA, in 2005. Through PRYSE Brenda Z. and I later attended an intensive training in the Catalano/Hawkins-influenced model of risk and protective factors.

- guide the coalition's operations and to be a clearinghouse for information including feedback from the community.
2. To develop a family resource center to support the network, provide concrete services and help strengthen families.
 3. To reduce violence in the schools by making security improvements, expanding the safe corridors program (a program of the NYPD), increasing the number of school safety agents and aides, developing peer mediation, establishing on-site counseling programs, increasing the social skills of children and reinforcing school policies regarding weapons, violent or poor behavior and substances.
 4. To reduce substance abuse by providing substance abuse education, enforcing existing schools policies and regulations and providing after-school and recreational activities.
 5. To reduce violence in the community by creating a community mediation center that will be a central place for community members to come to resolve conflicts in families or with neighbors; mediate gang disputes; create a network of peer and community mediators by training members of the community and youth; create a unifying youth council for the peninsula; develop new and expanding existing after-school programs with academic, recreation and anti-violence focus; create job training and job opportunities for youth; and provide police training on gang violence for at risk youth members.
 6. To reduce violence in the community by providing specialized mental health treatment services for violent adolescents.
 7. To support the healthy growth and development of all children by establishing a parent resource center in order to provide early intervention for high-risk pregnant women and supportive services through the developmental cycles for high-risk moms with preschool aged children and to establish churches as a hub for families to support healthy growth, particularly for preschool aged children.

These seven overarching goals were to be pursued via activities or strategies of six different types. Summarized in Table 3.1, the six strategy prongs correspond to the six elements specified in the original SS/HS requirements for funding (as covered in Chapter 1, section on "SS/HS Grant Concepts"). Although SS/HS required programming across all six elements, the PRYSE application focused most heavily on the "substance abuse and violence intervention" element:

| Required element | Local entity participants and plans |
|---|--|
| School Safety | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School district (safety agents and safety equipment) 2. NYPD (youth training and after-school patrols) |
| Substance Abuse and Violence Intervention | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family and community involvement <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Social workers (“one-stop shopping” for services) b. Volunteer Parent Advocates “modeling empowered behavior” c. Volunteer Community Mediators 2. Reshaping attitudes <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Police and district attorney training of students b. Volunteer Peer Mediation 3. Enforce existing laws <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. NYPD Gang Initiative and “Most Wanted” local newspaper program b. NYPD Truancy Program c. District Attorney’s Child Advocacy Center for investigations of child abuse 4. Recreation and mentoring as alternatives to substance abuse. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. NYPD and District Attorney’s Office out-of-school-time programs b. Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation youth entrepreneurship program and job preparation training |
| Mental Health and Counseling | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community-based services for violent teens: F-E-G-S Dialectical Behavior Therapy (social workers) |
| Early Intervention Programs | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [Family Health Clinic] Healthy Start Program (parenting support group, public health nurse home visits, formal developmental assessments for “high risk women”) 2. Bank Street College training for staff working with families and caregivers of children 3. Parenting support via a coordinator and trained mentors from the [Ministers Coalition]. |
| Education Reform | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community school district plans (separate and apart from PRYSE) 2. Expanded afterschool opportunities from F-E-G-S in the arts |
| (Safe) School Policies | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mediation services Queens Adolescent Diversion program for youth returning from the juvenile justice system [This program never got off the ground - MAR] |

⁶⁰ Several organizations mentioned in this table are not included in the case study. The local evaluation team divided responsibilities among its members, and this case study includes only those organizations that the author became intimately familiar with.

Figure 3.1, taken from an appendix to the PRYSE proposal, shows the original organizational plan. SS/HS required a local education agency as the central fiscal entity, at least on paper, which is exactly how it played out in the PRYSE project, as will be explored further below. Accordingly the formal applicant and actual recipient of funds was the school district that includes the Rockaways, which at the time had long been known as Community School District 27. (After the New York City schools system restructuring of 2002-3, CSD 27 became part of the new Region 5.)

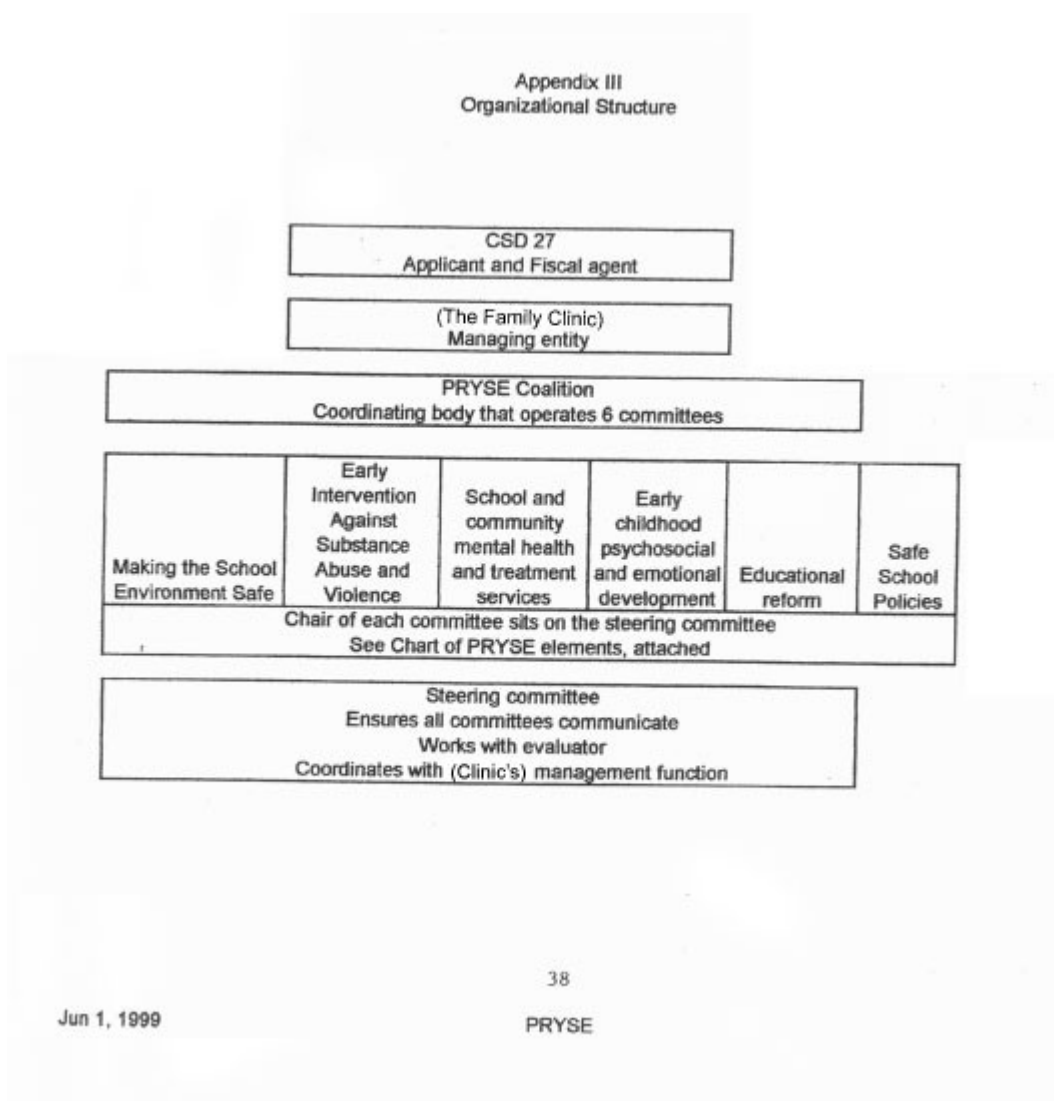


Figure 3.1. Organizational Structure of the PRYSE Initiative from original application of 1999. (Parenthetical redactions by the author.)

Under the original plan, the Family Health Clinic was to take the lead as the managing entity of the PRYSE Coalition and oversee activities in the six fields of activity. Each field would be coordinated by a committee of Coalition members. (The Coalition later chose a different structure of four committees, explained below.) The heads of the committees would meet on the Steering Committee and consult with the Evaluation Team as required by the grant. Our group from Baruch College was tapped for that role.

The PRYSE application was awarded the highest dollar amount nationwide for 2000 through Safe Schools/Healthy Students. The only award made to a New York City site at the time,⁶¹ it became official in April 2000 and the project technically began in June 2000, when PRYSE management held a public kick-off meeting to introduce the initiative to residents of the Rockaways community. However, none of the Coalition partners actually received funds before November 2000 (some as late as January 2001) because of the notorious, glacially-slow movement of the city's school system as the fiscal agent.

Evaluation Failure or Design Flaws?

From the outset it was clear that SS/HS would look more favorably on proposals for evidence-based programs with a strong evaluation arm.⁶² After the grant was

⁶¹ In 2001 a school district in Brooklyn and in 2002 one in the Bronx would also be awarded SS/HS grants (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2009).

⁶² As we saw in Chapter 1, the trend was to require social science evaluations as an integral part of federal social programming. A 1998 scandal at the US Department of Education may have prompted an even greater emphasis on evaluation during the creation of SS/HS. A *Los Angeles Times* article in September 1998 accused the DoE of spending funds made available through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act on inappropriate, unreasonable and suspect items. Examples discovered by the *Times* included a \$6,500 toy police car, four Glock Model 26 handguns, four magazine clips, a \$22,000 Pontiac Grand Prix, and an ultrasonic firearm cleaner for the Los Angeles Schools District's police force

awarded, the PRYSE Steering Committee met once a month for the entirety of the project, and the Evaluation Team attended almost every meeting, where the work of pursuing the initiative's missions took place. As the evaluators, we had our plans in place for a three-year community survey as a means of measuring community change, as well as for intensive process evaluations of PRYSE activities; but we struggled to bring to the funded partners of the Coalition the tools and technologies they needed to gather their own meaningful data (in the cases of those partners who did not already have such processes in place). We were unable to convince several partner organizations that if they wanted to meet conditions of current and potential funding, they needed to devise their own data-gathering strategies. In retrospect, we should have been more insistent.

While the programs that PRYSE implemented and the structural development of the Coalition were generally faithful to the original plans, difficulties arose because the broad goals of the original proposal were often impossible to measure or gauge with fidelity, or out of sync with the specific steps to meet them. So, for example, the Coalition created many mediation programs, and used the newly developed Community Resource Center as a hub for its activities; but whether this actually reduced violence in the community was impossible to determine. Despite the SS/HS emphasis on evaluation, the original PRYSE goals were written without consultation from evaluators, and

(Frammolino, 1998). Published during the 1998 wave of public-school rampage shootings, the expose caught enough attention that the Los Angeles school district was forced to reimburse the federal government for at least some of the expenses (especially several for which the reporter produced the receipts, like the Grand Prix). Even worse, the Safe and Drug Free Schools programs up to that time were considered to have produced poor results, causing Congress to reduce funding for the office in 1997 and to require (in July 1998) that funds be spent only on "research-based strategies." Frammolino also found that "top [Education] department officials admit they have no idea how much of the money is spent on programs, training, even metal detectors, because all of the decisions are made by state and local officials. But it is the way the money is distributed that hurts the cause, say experts and lawmakers" (Frammolino, 1998, para. 5). The following month Clinton held the first White House Conference on School Safety, one of the key events leading up to Safe Schools/Healthy Students. Given the timing this scandal was very likely to have influenced the tenor of the Education Department's participation in SS/HS.

admittedly written in haste. As a result, the evaluation function may have been compromised from the beginning. Ironically Brenda Z. would express disappointment with our team at the end of the project (as explained in Chapter 8), for our having relied on broad community-based measures instead of specific program-based measures or measures of individual change; however, the original definition of goals was an important factor in the inability to track true measurable outcomes.

To elucidate this gap between goals and the steps needed to reach them, much less measure them, consider again the third and fourth goals in the PRYSE proposal:

3. To reduce violence in the schools by making security improvements, expanding the safe corridors program (a program of the NYPD), increasing the number of school safety agents and aides, developing peer mediation, establishing on-site counseling programs, increasing the social skills of children and reinforcing school policies regarding weapons, violent or poor behavior and substances.
4. To reduce substance abuse by providing substance abuse education, enforcing existing schools policies and regulations and providing after-school and recreational activities.

Clearly, both of these speak to the heart of the SS/HS concept, but their lack of specificity creates a number of problems. First, the two goals assume that the ultimate “outcome” will be the reduction of school violence (a concept not defined in the proposal) and a reduction in substance abuse among youth. But crafting a baseline for each and linking the proposed activities to those baselines proved nearly impossible given the lack of the needed data and of the funds to gather or create such data. Second, the goals would have required that “security improvements” were funded for all 15 participating public schools (two high schools, three middle schools and ten elementary schools), but this funding also was not built into the proposal. In the end, only one school per year was given any technologies related to safety. Third, the goals would have also

required that the Coalition had input into, or more precisely, influence over, school policy as regards behavior and safety; this proved not to be the case. This was a factor that the designers of the proposal could not have anticipated; at the outset of PRYSE, none of us foresaw the lack of cooperation and involvement from the school district, or how difficult it would be to achieve its facilitation of PRYSE programs.

Now consider two analogous goals, the ones that specified a reduction in violence in the community as their end result:

5. To reduce violence in the community by creating a community mediation center that will be a central place for community members to come to resolve conflicts in families or with neighbors; mediate gang disputes; create a network of peer and community mediators by training members of the community and youth; create a unifying youth council for the peninsula; develop new and expanding existing after-school programs with academic, recreation and anti-violence focus; create job training and job opportunities for youth; and provide police training on gang violence for at risk youth members.
6. To reduce violence in the community by providing specialized mental health treatment services for violent adolescents.

The fifth goal especially speaks to the “comprehensive” nature of the CCI approach to social problems. A very wide net is cast. Each piece of the plan makes sense on its face: mediation for adults and young people, youth organizing and leadership, out-of-school-time activities, youth employment and gang-savvy, all as tools of community violence reduction. The goal of reducing community violence is even further extended to include mental health services for a pre-determined group of youth on the peninsula. In practice, programs and activities did take place that embodied the intentions of these plans, but the distance between the activities and the reduction of community violence would prove too vast for meaningful measurement and evaluation. We would also face the challenge of coming to general agreement over what community violence meant and

how to measure it, as each partner organization brought a different emphasis, understanding and set of priorities, despite having signed on to the same mission. (In Chapter 8 we shall return to these issues of “evaluation politics” in depth.)

The Partners in PRYSE

FUNDED PARTNERS

The original proposal specified the participation of 11 funded partners. My interviewees all shared the perception that the Clinic and the Mediation Center were the best-funded partners in the initiative, and that the Ministerial coalition was least-funded, and this perception matched the fiscal reality.⁶³

1. “The Family Health Clinic.” A fixture in Far Rockaway, the Clinic was the managing entity for the whole project. With its long history as a federally-funded center for preventive and primary care and traditional social work at several locations on the peninsula, the Clinic’s participation fulfilled the requirement that an SS/HS initiative include a local mental health services partner. The Clinic does not offer medical emergency services; those are covered by two hospitals on the peninsula, one of which is the Clinic’s hospital affiliate.

2. The School District. The fiscal agent on paper and, as the local educational authority, a required partner under SS/HS rules, CSD 27 and later Region 5 of the city’s reorganized Education Department would fatefully fail to take an active role in an initiative that, after all, was meant to focus on students and schools. The school district, the school system’s central bureaucracy and the principals of the 15 schools formally involved in the initiative were protective of and opaque about their institutions. They seemed to see little point in participating in PRYSE after the school district secured its initial funding for pre-assigned purposes, like security equipment and extra shifts for school security agents.

3. Baruch College School of Public Affairs – The Evaluation Team. PRYSE turned to the City University of New York and Baruch to recruit two faculty members, as well as myself and another Sociology student as graduate research assistants, to serve as

⁶³ Despite repeated requests, the Evaluation Team never received full access to the specifics of the PRYSE budget allocation by partner. I did receive budget breakdowns by type of spending (e.g., personnel, travel, supplies and the like) and also obtained Brenda Z.’s electronic files at the end of PRYSE for use in this dissertation. I have been able to piece together accurate details of how much the organizations I worked most closely with (QDA, NYPD and CMO) received per year, and also a correct idea of where the largest shares went.

the Evaluation Team required by SS/HS.⁶⁴ Gregg Van Ryzin, who had worked on the Edgemere/Arverne survey, became the principal investigator (PI) on the evaluation; his colleague from Baruch, Lynne Weikart, became co-PI. Both had extensive public administration research experience. By SS/HS requirement, 5 percent of total funds from the \$8.4 million grant (\$420,000) were assigned to finance the Evaluation Team and its activities over the three years of the grant period; a small share of this went to CUNY as the carrying institution of our group.

4. The Queens District Attorney's Office (QDA) as the local criminal justice agency was among the partners required by SS/HS. QDA representatives (and funding) were already present in the targeted neighborhoods, such as Far Rockaway, with involvements in specialized crime-fighting programs and youth-focused school, mediation, anti-drug and community-based initiatives. These included "STAR Track" (Straight Talk About Risks), an anti-violence curriculum, and "Operation Summer Fun." QDA's primary contact to PRYSE was Oscar M., the QDA Community Coordinator for Special Prosecutions, who had been hired using PRYSE funds. Most of the QDA share of PRYSE monies (a total of \$264,000 over the three funded years) went to subsidize salaries for the several QDA staff who engaged in PRYSE and related programs in the Rockaways, including an actual prosecutor. *QDA's participation in PRYSE and other programs is covered in Chapter 4.*

5. New York City Police Department (NYPD) as the local law enforcement authority was also a required partner under SS/HS guidelines. Like QDA, the NYPD and its precincts were also already involved in a number of existing youth-oriented initiatives such as Weed & Seed, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and Police Explorers. The NYPD's grants coordinator (Laura Jane B.) was quite active in PRYSE, and the force also assigned youth officers from the 100th and 101st precincts. Most of NYPD's direct share in PRYSE funds (a total of \$351,828 in the three funded years) went to subsidize its existing youth programs and to pay overtime for the establishment of "safe corridors" on the way home from neighborhood schools. *NYPD's participation in PRYSE and other programs is covered in Chapter 4.*

6. "The Community Mediation Organization, Inc." (CMO). A non-profit founded in the 1980s, CMO is a leading provider of community mediation and "criminal justice diversion" services for youth and adults in Queens, and maintains mediation centers and services for schools, neighborhoods and other institutions. CMO was acknowledged as the second-most influential partner within the PRYSE Coalition and received one of the larger shares of the initial PRYSE funding, starting with more than \$300,000 in the first year. The two people most involved in PRYSE were CMO founder Josh K. and associate executive director Tom H. *CMO's participation in PRYSE and other programs is covered in Chapter 4.*

7. "The Ministers Coalition." A coalition of African American and Caribbean black, Christian church ministries in Far Rockaway and neighboring Inwood, the

⁶⁴ My colleague, Eunjoo K., an international student, was replaced in the second year of the project by its principals, because of limited English-language skill, a decision which to this day leaves me uncomfortable.

Ministers Coalition had taken a special interest in counseling and mental health services on the peninsula. The group framed their contribution to the Coalition as servicing the mental health needs of their congregations, particularly through training their own social workers. Their most active representative in PRYSE was the Rev. Cassius C. of Far Rockaway.

8. Bank Street College of Education. The private College in the Upper West Side of Manhattan specializes in education, particularly graduate education for those who teach children and youth before college-level. Bank Street contributed to PRYSE mainly in the form of “training the trainer” events. Because they have expertise in early childhood development, they took a lead role in addressing the “early intervention” element of the project.

9. Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation (RDRC). RDRC started in 1978 and was at the time PRYSE began the only economic development corporation in the Rockaways. They also administer benefits as coordinator of the Rockaway Empire Zone.⁶⁵ Their focus in PRYSE was in running business education programs for youth: a youth entrepreneurship program and a youth pre-employment skills program.

10. Federated Employment and Guidance Services (F·E·G·S). F·E·G·S, which calls itself a “health and human service system” is a non-profit that was founded in 1934 by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (today known as the UJA-Federation of New York) to provide the Jewish and other communities with health and human services. They were the only funded partner to use an “evidence-based program” with their funding. They implemented “dialectical behavior therapy” in a local high school, a cognitive behavioral therapy that includes an introduction to meditation that was originally conceived for patients with bipolar disorder. The bulk of their funding paid for their staff to provide therapy for high school students.

11. Peninsula Hospital. A private hospital affiliated with the Family Health Center, “Peninsula,” as the locals refer to it, played no role in PRYSE, pulling out after the SS/HS award was made and money they were expecting – \$10,000 – was used for other Coalition-related work. The hospital’s spacious meeting hall was used for a few of the Coalition’s public gatherings.

The New York City Mayor’s Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator was also a partner, on paper. They received no funding through PRYSE. As the office provides a liaison between the mayor and all criminal justice agencies in the City, a representative attended several early Coalition meetings, possibly because of the early involvement of the US Attorney’s Office. Although they stopped attending PRYSE meetings after the first few months, the office was mentioned as one of the “lead

⁶⁵ “New York State’s Empire Zone Program was created in 1986 to stimulate economic growth through a variety of State tax incentives designed to attract new businesses to New York State and to enable existing businesses to expand and create more jobs” (Empire State Development, n.d., para. 1).

agencies” in every report, flyer and brochure that the Coalition produced, even in the final PRYSE evaluation report of 2004.

UNFUNDED PARTNERS

Three organizations that received no funds through PRYSE at times worked closely with us:

1. Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL). Paul D., the Director of Security of the QBPL, became involved with the PRYSE Steering Committee and attended many meetings and events, although his office is headquartered at the borough’s main branch in Jamaica, and although the QBPL received no funding through PRYSE. Having worked closely with one of the youth officers “detailed” to PRYSE, he was invited to meetings early in 2002 and remained among the few participants as PRYSE wound down its meetings in 2004. The library was an important resource to the Coalition for disseminating information, use of space, and as a site for QDA internships.⁶⁶

2. The Action Center for Education and Community Development, Inc. The Action Center is a non-profit in Far Rockaway that was founded in 2001 to address academic and recreation needs of area youth, when a local parent became so frustrated with her children’s public school that she was prepared to transfer them to a private school. The Action Center was involved with PRYSE, but less visibly as the organization was in its early stages during the Coalition’s work.

3. Rockaway Artists Alliance (RAA). A non-profit arts organization on the peninsula since 1994, a representative from the RAA, Helen J., was initially very involved in the Coalition and volunteered to be the chair of the Educational and School Initiatives committee. RAA’s participation in the Coalition was short-lived, as we will learn below.

OTHER PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES

Finally, at the time of the PRYSE application, three other “cross-systems groups” or CCI-type initiatives were already meeting on the peninsula. None of them formally joined PRYSE but each occasionally cooperated with us, especially Weed & Seed.

1. Far Rockaway Weed & Seed. Weed & Seed, *which is treated in Chapter 6*, is a nationwide law enforcement, crime prevention and “community development” strategy of the Justice Department. Initiated under the George H.W. Bush administration, Weed & Seed seeks to wed policing and prosecutorial strategies with the aim of removing targeted individual criminals from a “high-crime” area (“weeding”) while revitalizing the community (“seeding”). Weed & Seed came to be considered an unfunded partner in PRYSE thanks to P.O. Laura Jane B., the grants administrator from the NYPD who was

⁶⁶ My own involvement, as a volunteer and participant observer, with the library’s Far Rockaway branch for a few months is covered in Chapters 5 and 6. I also encountered Paul D. in the Weed & Seed initiative in Rockaway, where I worked after PRYSE ended.

already directing Weed & Seed in Arverne when PRYSE started. She brought the local police precincts into the PRYSE Coalition and attended most of the Steering Committee meetings until her retirement from the force in late 2003.⁶⁷

2. Coalition for Far Rockaway. A group founded by the Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway peninsula and also considered an unfunded partner of PRYSE, although the director came to only one PRYSE meeting to my knowledge. He was a key link to the Orthodox Jewish community and several partners reached out to him to work with youth in the Jewish community on the peninsula. They were not really a funded coalition, but they did seek sponsorship for small projects such as an annual holiday lighting project in Far Rockaway.

3. Rockaway Children's Committee (or Network). Formed in the early 1990s on an ad hoc basis with Brenda Z. in a leadership role, the group came together (as she explained it) around a crisis in mental health services for children. On several occasions Brenda Z. told the PRYSE Steering Committee that she saw the Children's Committee as the predecessor to PRYSE.

The Limits of Partnership: Unavoidable Divides?

In following the model required for SS/HS funding, the PRYSE Coalition brought several large, complex and bureaucratically-layered governmental organizations with centers of gravity far from the Rockaways to a table where their paid employees interacted with people from other, generally far smaller groups that were more clearly defined by and tied to the locality. The latter were public and private, funded and unfunded, and enjoyed different degrees of independence from government agencies; a couple of them were government contractors in other capacities. In addition, most of the people at the PRYSE table, even those who came as representatives of organizations

⁶⁷ As it had been unusual for a police department to directly administer any Weed & Seed site, after her retirement the NYPD decided to "turn it back to the community," according to Brenda Z. PRYSE applied to administer the Weed & Seed grant, but QBPL ended up winning the position. This caused community frustrations and hostility, and the site eventually received a new administrator from the local NAACP. I began attending Weed & Seed meetings out of curiosity in 2004, and was eventually hired to conduct a program evaluation for the site. I worked with the project until September 2006. During my time in the Rockaways, Weed & Seed meetings provided for the most public contention I saw with regard to race, class and policing. Again, see Chapter 6.

based in the community, were not necessarily (and in fact *not usually*) residents of the peninsula or nearby areas, let alone of the neighborhoods in the Eastern end of the peninsula that made up the initiative's main target areas. And further, it goes almost without saying that the decision-makers in the broadest sense belonged to the professional, employed and usually better-paid strata of society, in contrast to most of the subjects of their interventions. They also tended to be a more white group than the residents and school students of the target neighborhoods.

Appendix B presents demographic data on the PRYSE participants. If we consider the key representative from each of the funded PRYSE partners, only three of them lived on the peninsula. All of the key representatives from the funded groups were there because they were *paid* to play roles in PRYSE. If we broaden the scope and look at the most consistent Steering Committee meeting attendees, the vast majority were also people who were paid to be at the table, and who were not residents of Rockaway. This was never more clear than at the very end of the Coalition's work, as the funding ran out. Only a handful of us remained and some admitted to me their concern that others would see them as having left the table because there was no more money, an anxiety I shared. In retrospect, we had assumed responsibility for wanting to continue to work for change in this place that we had been working in for now many years, but also knew that without funded time, the work would not happen.

Of course, the motivations for attending Coalition meetings and events may have differed greatly among participants, depending on the organization and the life story that ultimately brings someone to the table in a given role. However, those who were concerned that the moral judgment of others would attach to their absences, even before

the money ran out, were correct. Institutional conflicts sometimes proved secondary when resentments built over who was *really* committed to the Coalition, as measured by personal presence, and who was not. The NYPD is a good example: it was noticeable when they were absent (the uniforms normally being conspicuous), and it was resented. The police could always provide the credible explanation that their roles as officers, and not as *youth* officers, came first. The reality was that their movements were tightly controlled by their superiors. But their absences were also interpreted as evidence that the NYPD lacked a connection to the community, and this judgment perhaps mattered even more to the police than to those around the table who delivered it.

Community coalitions require some minimal infrastructure to perform the tasks they set, and such functions typically need to be funded to be accomplished. In this case, however, the funding for the Coalition's infrastructure was altogether inadequate, as monies were disbursed among the partners and not to the Coalition itself, due to a lack of foresight of what it takes to create an active coalition. In such cases the bulk of the work might fall to the group that takes on the leadership position, and at PRYSE the Family Health Clinic played that lead role. This was not only because Brenda Z. was the originator and project manager, but also because the Clinic was the largest and best-funded of the Coalition participants (that is, within the initiative itself). The Community Mediation Organization played a close second in the Coalition, in terms of its share of PRYSE funding and also in influence. The CMO's executive director and several of its staff members served in leadership roles on each of the PRYSE committees.

Brenda Z. was a social worker and, given that training, understood the constraints of the systems in which she, and all of us, were working. And yet she determined that

focusing on community change along an activist, resident-driven model was *not* the most appropriate path with which to garner favors, either with the federal government or with other potential funding entities. In addition, as was clear to all from the beginning, in Brenda Z.'s view it was essential to please, or appease, such entities if the Coalition was to secure or "leverage" its future sustainability. The leadership of the Coalition was, perhaps inevitably, shaped by that imperative, and we will see many examples of it below.

That much might be true of countless such initiatives in the country. Some additional observations are in order, very specific to PRYSE, on the consequences of how the original partnership was hastily convened to meet the SS/HS deadlines and requirements. In their long-running regular work, several of the PRYSE partners specialized in one or more of the elements required by SS/HS; but once in the Coalition, the challenge was in getting everyone to agree on specific goals within each element. The law enforcement idea of an accomplished goal may differ from that of the mental health professionals; and the educational authority, as we shall see, was usually absent.

The Coalition was formed on the terms of entry articulated in the weeks before the grant between Brenda Z. as the presumptive manager and each of the partners individually. The lack of a functioning coalition prior to the grant presented many challenges, some related to the politics and social psychology of groups with disparate goals teaming up around a specific vision imposed by grant requirements. There was also the simple lack of familiarity among many of the partners, which added another learning curve in the first year. Brenda Z. sought to overcome such obstacles with the

motto, “Every institution is constrained by its own mission; the vision ties us all together.”

Money is a perennial constraint, however, on missions and visions alike. Early on it became clear that members of the Coalition, expected to collaborate in making this collective effort sustainable, had been and remained *competitors* for other grants, government and private, in an environment where funds are both needed and scarce. In addition, the terms incorporated into the SS/HS proposal had *already* committed the eventual funding disbursements to the PRYSE partners. Community residents were not the only ones to be informed *after the fact* that the grant money was almost fully earmarked from the start, having been more or less divided among the partners in the negotiations that brought them into the Coalition. Arguably the overall funding was never enough, in dollars or in years, to adequately address the initiative’s aims. But even this “not-enough” was, so to speak, already gone at the beginning, removing one of the key incentives for the partners to work together, or for new partners to join. Indeed, early on we ran into delays as new people joined the Steering Committee, coming to the table in hopes of finding funding, only to leave just as quickly when they discovered that no funds were available. Perhaps even worse, when Coalition partners eventually negotiated a number of new goals not specified in the original proposal, they found that they could not redistribute monies to new purposes because the agreement with the federal government was not subject to change. The challenges inherent in this lack of flexibility became clear after the work began officially in the spring and summer of 2000.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ In subsequent years of the SS/HS initiative, which is still a federally-funded program as of this writing, the application review has become more attentive to whether a coalition provides evidence that it pre-existed the grant application. The SS/HS website now contains a “readiness assessment” that asks if the group considering making an application has created its partnerships prior to application.

Different organizational missions also entail different working languages and methodologies. In an initiative like Safe Schools, attempting to bring together traditionally disparate approaches, the approach that “wins” (meaning, that gets to define agenda, activity, even terminology) will likely be the one that shows the greatest empirical skill and data collection savvy, instead of the more elegant and persuasive logic and theory. In PRYSE, as one would expect at many other sites, the common language, at least of our meetings, became that of social work, which was most closely aligned with the public health approach. The social work perspective happened to be represented by the two organizations with the most charismatic leaders, also the two that had received the most money. This is a classic story, of those who have the most material resources (again in this case *within* PRYSE, certainly not among the partners or in the society at large) also having the most privileged ideal interests and, ultimately, the most say. By contrast, the criminal justice institutions were more rigid and inflexible in their approach and involvement – perhaps also because they had more of an option to leave the table and/or ignore the proceedings (just as the school district ended up doing). Despite the culture of empirical evidence in which these institutions also reside, they showed less of a need for involvement in the partnership, and were less interested in changing their own ways, nor were they encouraged to change those ways explicitly.

Difficulties with the School District and the Schools

But before the partners could enact such internal dynamics of partnership – for better or worse – the active members of PRYSE were confronted persistently with an obstacle beyond their oversight and beyond their political reach to affect. Any objectives

that required the school district for implementation – or, more accurately, that required the *initiative* of the school district – tended to run up against a marked *absence* of interest on the school district’s part. This was especially true of matters related to timely budgeting and requests for changes in school policy.

Only at the end of the project did I learn that when Gale Brewer first approached Community School District 27 in 1999 to recruit them as the lead agency in a proposal to SS/HS, they said that they were not interested. According to Brenda Z. in an interview years later, the school district operated on the assumption that they “never got grants.” However, CSD 27 officials promised to offer support if someone else wanted to submit an SS/HS proposal. Looking back, Brenda Z. said the school district was relieved to have had only the fiscal responsibility for the project; “they were relieved not to have to deal with it.” Brenda Z. said that Gale Brewer was key in making the application happen at all, because she was the person who initially contacted the superintendent of the school district and his director of operations, Cloris G. Brenda Z. volunteered to take the lead on pulling together the application, but all the while assumed that Cloris G., whom she had only just met because of this application, would be the school district liaison to the project. In fact, Brenda Z. told me that they took money away from every other organization in the application process to fund the liaison position, hence her shock later to learn that Cloris G. all along intended to pay someone else to be the liaison (Brenda Z., personal communication, December 12, 2004).

This meant that a project intended to focus on “schools” and “students” went ahead with the school district as a reluctant or indifferent tag-along. This was one of the obvious reasons why the SS/HS ideal of shared governance in a partnership to affect

conditions at schools would not be realized in the Rockaways, and – as I came to see – may not have been possible in New York City, where the school system is a city unto itself, its workings often opaque and hostile to the outside world (almost understandably given the severity with which the institution and its personnel are attacked in public, sometimes irrationally, and blamed for society’s ills) and where since 2002 the system has been directly under the quasi-autocracy of the mayor.

The school district’s distance from the Coalition proved frustrating and problematic for several reasons, first of all in concrete fiscal terms. Although the work of PRYSE began in earnest in June 2000, and some of the funded partners were able to front the money to pay for their own staff in the meantime, several partners were not paid until November 2000, and still others not until 2001. In an October 2000 interview with the CSD 27 director of special projects, Cloris G., she explained to me the practice of “fronting”:⁶⁹

...the City of New York puts up the money up front; we don’t actually get the money until June 2001, though the project began in 2000. The Federal Government doesn’t actually release the money until the CSD submits an FS 10 next year. Anything that is not tax-levy money has to be fronted. The same goes with Title I money: the Department of Education gets last year’s money this year.⁷⁰

Fronting money was common with the school district as with other city agencies, but it was usually a serious hardship for non-governmental entities.

The proposal to SS/HS, in which CSD 27 after all was the actual applicant, listed Cloris G. as the school district official in charge of maintaining business with PRYSE

⁶⁹ Although I had made repeated attempts to meet with Cloris G. as the representative from CSD 27 overseeing the grant when the project officially began, and although I had early meetings or at least phone conferences with representatives of all the other funded agencies and organizations as a necessity of beginning the Evaluation Team’s work, Cloris G. had put me off until late October 2000.

⁷⁰ The FS 10 was a budget form used in New York State public education.

and its projects. Soon after the grant, however, Cloris G. made it clear in a series of forcefully worded e-mails (and sometimes through the complete absence of communications or responses to our requests) that a host of other responsibilities at the school district headquarters in Ozone Park would prevent her from actually serving as the CSD 27 liaison to PRYSE in the Rockaways.

As a result, Rick H. became the first actual liaison from CSD 27 to PRYSE, in June 2000. He would serve in that role for less than a year. His supervisor would later say only that “the choice didn’t work out.” Someone else would tell me, “He didn’t understand systems. He pissed off so many people.” Rick H. himself told me the problem was that he acted with too much fidelity to his role as initially conceived, wanting to do more than they wanted him to do: “I left working with PRYSE after a few months for what I thought were obvious reasons having to do with frustrations from School District 27’s perspective as to what my position and duties with regard to the initiative were.” Clearly, there was more to all this than meets the eye, but I could get no more direct information. But knowing from a reliable source that he “pissed off” people and knowing Rick H., as I worked closely with him, it seemed clear to me that he was a rabble-rouser. He was a long-time Rockaway resident and outspoken about the problems he saw in his neighborhood; he had the flavor of a community organizer. He was not shy about criticizing the City and the schools. I could see where his extroverted style may have been problematic, particularly because his role as liaison was to pull fifteen school principals into the Coalition, and this at a time when the school district was moving toward a business model reliant on detached politeness.

Rick H.'s replacement as CSD 27 liaison, Wayne G., was transferred to the district from a position as a health educator with the central Board of Education. Although Wayne G. was designated for the liaison's role in July 2001, delays in paperwork meant that he did not begin working in CSD 27 until mid-September. Wayne G. was also given many other duties in his job with the school district. Nevertheless, after his hiring relations between CSD and the other funded partners were considered to have "improved significantly," according to a later PRYSE status report:

As a result of this new relationship, more programs are being planned with the schools. For instance, each school has placed a PRYSE bulletin board in a visible area. Packets have been sent home to parents with information about PRYSE, its funded programs and services. The CSD 27 Superintendent and his staff are clearly committed to supporting PRYSE. (PRYSE Report: Jan. 1-June 30, 2002, p. 2).

Wayne G. said he saw his role with PRYSE as an intermediary, attempting to influence the school district and the Coalition in terms of those two organizations' intentions (in fact, most representatives around the table at the Coalition's Steering Committee meetings would find themselves in the same position vis-à-vis their own organizations, but the case of the schools was different because they were meant to be central to the initiative's work). Wayne G.'s own definition of his role implicitly admitted a lack of authority to make very much of it:

...my job basically is... if any of the committees or PRYSE or the Steering Committee, if they need information from, communication with, direction from the District, contact with the District people, I have, sort of, the inside track in terms of getting to [superintendent of district from 2001 - 2003] or [another district-level supervisor] or at least introducing ideas from the committee or PRYSE to the District for consideration. And then in conjunction with what I think, what the District thinks and what the committees may want, come up with a plan or a direction. So that's basically what it is. And just sort of keeping PRYSE aware of what the District is doing and keeping the District aware of what the committees

are doing and trying to make those things parallel each other to some degree – needs of the District, resources of PRYSE; needs of PRYSE, resources of the District. And trying to make that as efficient as possible. (Wayne G., personal communication, May 2, 2002).

I asked Wayne G. in this interview what he saw as most difficult in the work we were doing:

As always, it's the people. That's the biggest challenge. Its not getting money or having, doing projects, its just getting people to come together and have a common goal and a mission and to put aside their differences and agree that for this next year or two years, or whatever it may be, that they're going to participate, be involved, be productive and have a common goal and mission and you know that's not easy to do any place.

In reflecting on Wayne G.'s position at the end of PRYSE, Brenda Z. said that although he had the “finesse,” he did not start out with relationships in the community (which Rick H. had possessed, in spades). And by the time Wayne G. finally and with great patience had built those relationships, after two years, the Bloomberg administration enacted a sweeping reorganization of the entire New York City school system. Wayne G. was summarily reassigned to other, unrelated tasks, as were presumably hundreds or thousands of others at the time.⁷¹

The changes that swept out Wayne G. also swept in his replacement, Andre L., in August 2003. Following the restructuring of the city's school districts into larger “regions,” he now came to the liaison function with the title of Coordinator of External Programs from the new Region 5. Like Wayne G. before him, Andre L. was also

⁷¹ Several major school restructurings took place in New York City public schools during the time of the Rockaway initiative. In 2002, the mayor for the first time was awarded direct control over the city's schools. Mayor Bloomberg instituted a long train of sweeping changes. The Board of Education was dissolved and renamed the Department of Education. School districts were merged into larger regions. A new superintendent was installed over the newly formed Region 5, which covered the former CSD 27. In 2007, the regions were dissolved. The New York State Senate voted in August 2009 to keep control of schools with the Mayor, after a deadlock the month before had briefly reincarnated the Board of Education.

transferred to Queens from a position at the newly renamed Education Department's central offices, now moved from the venerable Board of Education building in Brooklyn to the more externally impressive Tweed Building in Manhattan. Andre L. remained with the Coalition until the end of PRYSE, a little more than a year later.

Looking back at the end of the project, Brenda Z. would concur that "we were not working along as equal partners with the school system." She was of the view that the whole story of PRYSE would have been different, if only more senior-level school district staff had worked as active members of the Coalition from the beginning.

Fact is, PRYSE in itself could and would accomplish little or nothing in influencing school environments, implementing safe school policies and/or advancing any other reform inside actual schools, because the school district (later the region) and the principals of the Rockaway schools had complete control over those arenas and little interest in what they saw either as an outside intrusion or yet another weight on their overburdened backs.⁷² On their own, however, some of the PRYSE partner institutions were more successful at entering schools to implement programs than others. This was especially true of the criminal justice agencies, which had preexisting programs in or relationships with schools.⁷³ The Community Mediation Organization also had some preexisting programs and could gain entry to Rockaway schools. And of course, insofar as the school district acted as a PRYSE partner, it had access.

⁷² As mentioned in Chapter 1, international comparative research on school violence indicates that countries that produce the widest divisions in school achievement also demonstrate higher levels of violence in schools. School reform was meant to be a centerpiece of all SS/HS sites, but Rockaway was unique in that the school district was the fiscal agent only, and not responsible for program management nor for interaction beyond that facilitated by the liaison.

⁷³ Particularly, as noted, that school security had come under the direct jurisdiction of the NYPD in 1998.

The PRYSE funds that went directly to the school district under the original proposal were earmarked for three areas:

1) “school safety,” meaning cameras and outdoor lights to be installed at three schools out of the 15 participating;

2) school aides, who are paraprofessionals viewed as “cultural brokers” between teachers and students at public schools; and

3) more safety agents after 4:30 pm, when many after-school programs had been planned.

The costs had been underestimated in the original budget. In the case of the equipment, installations that cost \$50,000 had been budgeted at only \$35,000, a difference of \$15,000 per. This forced the three installations to take place over three years instead of the planned single year, with the difference in costs each year balanced by the school construction authority.

In discussing these measures in 2000, Cloris G. educated me about the different schools that had been included in the project. She singled out only one of the 15 schools marked for interventions as having no need for what she called “increased security measures.” (When interviewed, however, that school’s principal requested both “conflict mediation services” and on-campus cameras.) This school was on the Western end of the peninsula, served generally middle- and upper-income families, and had the highest percentage of white students in the area by far: around 85 percent. With only 20 percent of the students qualifying for free lunch, it had the lowest percentage of low-income students out of the elementary schools in our group.

The view of a peninsula divided into sections with gradations by race and class from west to east came with a complementary view of safety in the different areas. As Cloris G. put it, “generally from 57th Street down to Far Rockaway (the lower Beach numbers), the schools have a greater need for security measures. These schools are less safe. Schools that are located above Beach 57th Street are a safer environment.” Another elementary school, located in the 50s below the cut-off line she mentioned, had been struggling with low test scores and disciplinary issues for 20 years. An editorial in the *New York Times* focused on that school for its remarkable improvements since the late 1990s, but agreed with Cloris G.’s assessment from 2000:

In the late 1990's P.S. 105 was on the state's failing list. Ten percent of students were proficient in math, 9 percent in reading. Student fights were common; parents roamed the halls. "Kids would be standing on the lunch tables screaming," says Bonnie Petrone, a teacher (Winerip, 2005, p. 1).

Without prompting, Cloris G. attributed the differences in safety between the ends of the peninsula to “a culture of people that don’t prepare children for school.” She elaborated:

These children are not nurtured in their early years. That culture [on the Eastern end] doesn't know how to talk to their children. Few of those children have ever visited Manhattan; few of them are ever exposed to all the resources a city like this has to offer. These children have no history of a father figure in their families. That culture is a piece of what we want to turn around (Cloris G., personal communication, October 25, 2000).

In this way, Cloris G. (and Brenda Z., in part informed by Cloris G.’s analysis) promoted the view at the initiative’s beginning that the problems of the Rockaways, specifically in the East End, and particularly in the public schools, were bred from a

“culture,” although she did not call it a “culture of poverty.”⁷⁴ Invoking “culture” in this context is a way of talking about race without talking about race, and of alluding to class without acknowledging it.

The First Public Meetings – “We Want to Change the Culture”

The Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant was announced and PRYSE was presented to a Rockaways public for the first time in a meeting at Peninsula Hospital on June 9, 2000. In attendance were about ninety people, mostly residents, many of them already community or parent activists, but also politicians, local media and high-level supervisors from most of the funded partners.⁷⁵ Brenda Z. served as the event MC. She explained that the Coalition had received funding from the Clinton administration as a response to violence in schools. In describing the peninsula and the award, she said, “we finally got attention... we’ve been so isolated.” The executive director of The Family Health Clinic, Brenda Z.’s supervisor, took to the podium to announce that the “Rockaways are coming back.” He said he saw reinvestment happening, and that 16,000 new jobs had been created in the area in the past year [a claim that I have been unable to confirm]. The Rockaways, he said, were home to “the poorest, least healthy, least educated [people] in Queens.” The marginality of residents bespoke a “danger of people being pushed out.” The PRYSE strategy was to “focus on those most marginalized, so that they rise with the tide instead of being pushed out.” Referring to the amount of the

⁷⁴ The CSD 27 rep also mentioned, in the context of school reform, that the district had more schools (9 total) participating in the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) competitive grant than any other district. CSR was a federal program that began in 1998 to help Title 1 schools raise student achievement using reforms “that are based upon scientifically based research and effective practices” (Comprehensive School Reform Program, 2004, para. 2). The program was defunded in 2008.

⁷⁵ The police were at first absent, arrived late and said little.

federal grant, he expressed the intention to “leverage the \$9 million into more,” and the expectation that PRYSE would serve as a “model for rest of the country.” The Family Health Clinic’s executive director would make other PRYSE-related appearances, at the most important public gatherings and several of the retreats, but rarely came to regular committee meetings.

The “Community Mediation Organization, Inc.” was introduced as having “a key role” in the initiative. They announced themselves as a violence prevention program that offers “not a reactive, but a proactive response to conflict.” Their representative explained that their work would be in “promoting positive self-determination” through conflict mediation, peer mediation, and coordinating a youth council across schools on the peninsula.

The official launch date of project activities was set for September 1, with the first funded year to run through the end of August 2001. During this first public meeting it became clear that some local residents felt they had been excluded from the process; they were angry and resentful at being asked to participate – from their perspective, being asked *yet again* – and to be told about programs that would focus on their children, without having been consulted as the parents of those children in the first place. Representatives from the tenants associations of the local housing developments expressed anger at not having been included in the application process. At least two African American women residents of the Edgemere public houses were at the meeting. One explained: “We haven’t been included in the planning; the parent associations haven’t been included. This is happening without our input.”

Brenda Z. acknowledged that Gale Brewer had approached her and the other partners a year earlier, but that no particular group in the community had been approached until now. The resident then replied, “I don’t have degrees, but I am a member of this community and I resent not being approached.” She explained that “we need the help, but you need to include residents, parents. We are more concerned about our children. If you don’t get parents’ input, you’ve wasted \$9 million.”

Brenda Z.’s response was to point out that this public meeting was only the first, and also to refer to an earlier meeting of some kind at Edgemere.⁷⁶ The resident, having participated in the HOPE VI housing revitalization efforts at her own development, urged strongly that HOPE VI be included as a regular participant in the Coalition (this never came to pass). Brenda Z. otherwise addressed residents’ concerns by circulating a mailing list that would be used to keep people in communication with the Coalition.

A second public meeting, toward the end of July 2000, was smaller but saw some of the same tensions. At this meeting, meant as somewhat of a planning session, Brenda Z. repeated a phrase that I would hear her say several times during the first six months of the Coalition meetings, but that she eventually abandoned: “We want to change the culture in the Rockaways.” She unpacked the maxim by adding that the Coalition was to ensure that “kids see that they have options besides gangs and drugs and that the parents see options for their kids” (Brenda Z., personal communication, July 24, 2000). She also emphasized that “it’s not enough to throw money at a problem or program” but that cultural change must happen.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ I don’t know any details about that, when and with whom it happened.

⁷⁷ Cloris G. in one of these first public meetings mentioned the book “*Who Moved My Cheese?*” as a good metaphor for the changes coming to schools on the peninsula. The book was a *New York Times* bestseller for almost five years. The title referred to experimental mice conditioned always to expect cheese in the

During this second meeting the public learned in greater depth which programs would be implemented by the funded partners. At the first mention of funding, the representative from “The Ministers Coalition” asked Brenda Z. as program manager to explain how funds had been allocated to the organizations participating in the Coalition. She artfully avoided the question by instead explaining that the government had cut all funding across the board by seven percent. Later we would discover that The Ministers Coalition had received the lowest funding proportion in the PRYSE Coalition. The Rev. Cassius C., who attended all of the PRYSE meetings without exception (to my knowledge) over the years, was one of only a very few voices at PRYSE to advocate an explicit social justice perspective. He also came to be viewed as a “troublemaker” by many around the table (initially, including me). Cassius C. was the most outspoken member of the PRYSE Coalition on behalf of the “grassroots,” and happened to be one of only three local resident participants who also represented a funded organization, and one of only three people of color in that same role. He was also among the few who could and would frequently brew controversy and pose uncomfortable questions around the PRYSE Steering Committee table – to the point where he was even considered a source of crisis.

Cassius C. would occasionally refer to his very political past in his native country, Belize, but it was only many years later that I would learn the extent of his involvement in political work. In 1969, he became the first president of the United Black Association for Development (UBAD) in then British Honduras; this organization was modeled on

same spot, and their difficulties to process change when their cheese was moved to a different location. The book was notoriously criticized for being used by managers to quell anger and frustration over structural reorganization in corporate environments. Among the critical answers to the book was one entitled, “*Who Moved My Soap? The CEO's Guide to Surviving in Prison.*”

the US black nationalist movement and was founded by Evan X. Hyde, who was the official secretary, as an empowerment organization (Moody-Freeman, 2008). Starting out as a cultural organization but evolving into a political party within two years, UBAD upheld a firm commitment to African origin as the basis for self-empowerment. Cassius C. brought that history with him to the table at the PRYSE Coalition, and although he rarely went into detail about it, he made it clear in word and deed that Stokely Carmichael was among his strong influences.

The July meeting, the second of PRYSE, broke out into smaller groups to review the peninsula's current "service delivery systems." Based on those discussions, the suggestion was advanced that the Coalition should divide its attention between community safety, education, and health and mental health as a way to address the six areas of concentration required by the federal funding. Several other suggestions advanced during that meeting would eventually be implemented, including: developing a web page; creating a toll-free "warm line" for community residents to access services;⁷⁸ and creating a marketing campaign for the project. Two other suggestions were to develop a community court and more school-based early intervention programs. While these ideas may have come to pass, they did not happen via PRYSE.

The "Community and School Safety" Committee

In late September 2000, we met again to develop working committees and to brainstorm goals and objectives for the Coalition. Attendance and enthusiasm were high, although it should be noted that not everyone at that point had realized that no additional

⁷⁸ The notion of "warm lines" as opposed to "hot lines" is attributed to Adkins and Ainsa (1979) who advocated them as a prevention service to be contrasted with the crisis-orientation of "hot lines."

funding would be forthcoming from association with the SS/HS initiative. PRYSE formed five “operating committees,” of which four were specialized by activity:

- Community and School Safety;
- Educational and School Initiatives;
- Community Development;
- Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support.

The fifth was to be the Steering Committee, which included representatives from the other committees and all of the PRYSE Coalition partners, and began meeting the next month (although roughly the same group had been meeting *de facto* for months during the initiative’s planning stages). Thanks to my personal inclination as well as the need to effect a division of labor within the Evaluation Team, it was agreed that in addition to attending the Steering Committee, my role would be to observe and evaluate the “Community and School Safety” grouping and its most active partner organizations, while my Evaluation Team colleagues concentrated on the other committees.⁷⁹ Over the next two to three years most of the subsidiary committees would dwindle and even die as frustrations and conflicts emerged over who was paid to be there (and to perform work outside committee time) and who was not so compensated. But during at least the first year, attendance remained high with many partner representatives as well as community residents among the regulars on all of the committees.

The Steering Committee was chaired initially by Brenda Z. and by Cathy C., an employee of the Family Health Clinic who served PRYSE during its first two years almost full time under the title of Coalition Coordinator. October 2000 saw the first

⁷⁹ This determined the focus of my participation in PRYSE for the next three to four years and thus the course of my research, and explains the boundaries of this dissertation. In the remainder of this chapter and in the bulk of the next three chapters, I will in the main describe the activities of and examine the institutional workings of those Coalition partners who were most active on the Community and School Safety committee; and I will also deal with a few larger issues that came up through that work. We will also track concurrent developments with PRYSE in general and in the other committees, but my knowledge of doings at the other committees was usually from their own reports.

official Steering Committee meeting since the decision to have standing committees; thirty people were in attendance. This was also the first meeting to include an outside consultant from the federal SS/HS Action Center, who arrived emphasizing the need for sustainability of the Coalition's work. Known as a "consultant/broker," her job was to consult directly with the group but also to "broker the expertise of others" (M. Lum, personal communication, October 27, 2000). Ms. Lum explained that the coalition, and specifically the steering committee, could ask for technical assistance during the grant. She was the first to introduce us to Catalano and Hawkins, recommending their work to us as we looked into the future to sustain the coalition. She also suggested that we bring in a consultant to assist us with "consensus building on your mission and vision." She explained that national organizations would be at our disposal and that she would negotiate this assistance on our behalf.

That same month, as the operating committees began their work, the Community and School Safety committee held its first meeting at an elementary school in Far Rockaway, where the principal was an enthusiastic participant. In the beginning, these meetings were co-chaired by three people: Josh K., the founder and director of the non-profit CMO, who would remain the vocal and influential chair throughout; police officer Laura Jane B., who served the NYPD as its coordinator of grants; and a parent advocate and community representative, Sandra S. By the end of 2002, members of the committee would be so frustrated with our apparently fruitless work (and with each other) that we generally stopped meeting. But that first year began with promise. Among the most active participants were the principal, youth officers from the local precincts, the leadership from the CMO (Josh K. and Tom H.), the school district liaison (at the time,

Rick H.), the representative from the Queens District Attorney's office (Oscar M.), and Rev. Cassius C. from the Ministers Coalition. In short, the main players in the Coalition and many from the peninsula were represented.

Josh K. led off the first meeting by asking all attendees to identify the organization they represented and specify any "resources – specifically data and knowledge – they [could] contribute to doing a needs assessment for the community" (October, 2000). He told us that we need "to have a map of the issues we wish to address over the next three years." It quickly became clear that people had seized on the word "map" literally, and Josh K. did not dissuade that interpretation.

A representative from children's services explained that she served children suspected of being abused and neglected, to try and prevent out-of-home placements; as the employee from a Nassau County hospital, she worked in a school-based clinic for three local schools doing classroom workshops and said she tended to see "the children that are very angry" as well as the many children raised by grandparents who are "stressed and need support." Her activities were classified by the hospital as "outpatient mental health services." The co-chair and parent advocate Sandra B. – who was deeply involved with PRYSE for over a year before disengaging herself from the Coalition because of "personal problems" – said she was there to offer the perspectives of parents on safety issues. Then the heavy hitters stepped up to the plate.

The Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator would not be long involved with PRYSE, but at this meeting, its representative spelled out an impressive list of the knowledge to which she had access:

...a consolidated juvenile information system which includes information from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Probation and the Corporation

Council, which... tries juvenile crimes. Any child that has come through the system is included in this database. We can help you identify the service needs specifically for this area through broad statistics.

After her explanation the committee agreed that they wanted to see a literal mapping of the peninsula. Specifically, they wanted “the pattern of delinquency by community district and maybe zip code.” The representative said that she could also get us data from other agencies, including the Administration for Child Services and the Office of Court Administration. If she ever provided any data, however, to my knowledge these were never shared with this committee or the Coalition.

The NYPD youth officer on the committee also offered us great access to data, which included police “maps of everything from truancy to domestic violence via the CompStat program.”⁸⁰ He said the program would allow us to see a variety of categories such as “only youth-on-youth crime,” gang-related activity or generic crimes. The committee told him they wanted to see areas of high crime across the peninsula. He explained that the NYPD also monitored “activities around schools already” and said he could bring us those data. Eventually my job would include chasing after this officer and others from the other local precinct to get even a smidgen of data. In the end, my graduate student research colleague and I would resort to spending hours in the gorgeous, old-school municipal library across from City Hall in Manhattan, our pockets loaded down with dimes, making endless pages of photocopies of the published NYPD statistics on reported crime and arrest data.

⁸⁰ CompStat is a now very widely used computerized tracking system of crime that allows police departments to target areas with precision, in New York City first implemented in the 1990s under the Giuliani administration, more about which in chapters 6 and 7.

Introducing the QDA's office, Oscar M. focused on their own STAR (Straight Talk About Risks) Track program but said the QDA might also be able to provide data on felony domestic violence cases. The Family Health Clinic's representative explained that they had recently compiled data on the "major indicators for the peninsula by zip code, including literacy, immunizations, and health outcomes." The principal of the school in which we were meeting offered to liaison between the committee and all other principals on the peninsula. He was asked to organize a meeting with principals so they could share their concerns about safety. (That meeting never took place, presumably because of the growing reluctance among principals to participate.)

Already the de facto first among committee chairs, Josh K. talked about mediation services, noting that his organization was the "designated dispute center for Queens." CMO wanted to do a "needs assessment with each school principal." (They tried, only to meet with great resistance along the way.) Eventually, Rick H. would sit down with every principal, one-by-one, to ask what they needed for their school in terms of school safety. CMO also wanted to open a mediation center on the peninsula, but this plan went unfulfilled due to lack of a sustainable funding source. Finally, Josh K., as the executive director and founder of his organization, was forthright about CMO's intent "to develop the relationship between our agency and [the health center]."⁸¹

My role at the September 2000 committee meeting was to introduce the work of the Evaluation Team and explain that we were being asked by Safe Schools/Healthy Students to implement a survey in participating schools as part of the larger national

⁸¹ Of all outcomes intended from the Coalition, measurable or not, we saw that one happen before our eyes. Over the years other participants (privately) voiced frustration over the way that the Family Health Clinic and the mediation service, as the two best-funded groups in the Coalition, dominated Steering Committee meetings and worked hand in hand.

evaluation. There was enthusiasm for the survey, which however would also not come to pass in the planned form.⁸²

In short, the data frenzy at the first committee meeting went on for hours: the chair kept returning to the theme of discussing needs and how to map them. Before the meeting ended, I felt compelled finally to object to prioritizing the needs assessment. I asserted that we already had more than enough data – having seen what had been gathered for the original PRYSE proposal, a significant portion of which included the kinds of data of which the committee members were now in hot pursuit. I was also well aware of the additional wealth of data available for the Rockaways, with which I had become familiarized through my paid work for the Coalition.

But most of the committee was convinced that our work was to do our own research (again). I had a tense back-and-forth with Josh K. over the plan, insisting that spending committee time and effort to gather information was of less utility than reviewing what was known and what was funded and strategizing to act. Many of the people at the meeting had never seen the PRYSE proposal, so I said I would bring copies of the proposal for everyone. (That would not prove to be enough.) Remember that the chair was an expert in mediation and, as I would come to learn from that day forward, quite talented at reshaping conflict and redirecting anger. I must confess I was vocal – and perhaps marginalized because I so publicly struggled with my assigned dual role as “evaluator” and “participant.” I was angry that so much accumulated expert knowledge

⁸² When the Evaluation Team tried to implement it a year later, with the approval of the Department of Education and the leadership of the school district, we were blocked by principals and parents who refused to have their children – particularly black children – participate in yet another survey about safety (see the section in Chapter 5 titled “‘Studied to Death’ – In Search of Youth”).

was in the process of being dismissed⁸³ – and that the accumulated experience in community organizing present in PRYSE, of all those hoping to improve the lives of the neighborhood’s kids, was beginning to seem futile in light of the bureaucracy already unfolding around us.

My inclination is to agree with Rozycki (2004) that

needs assessment with its gratuitous complexities and special language appears to work to do little more than to maintain an appearance of professionalism with which to ward off the criticisms of a less than informed and understanding public. The tragedy is that possibly soluble problems forego solution because we, the educators, with our needs assessment and other paraphernalia of social science manqué have succumbed to the counsel of despair (para. 29).

At the same meeting, calls went up loud and clear from organizational representatives who lived on the peninsula for more community participation, stressing the need in particular to include local youth; but that participation would never come to light in the decision-making processes. Youth would be included in the PRYSE project as clients, not as agents of change or as partners in reducing youth violence.⁸⁴

Partly in response to this call for participation, the committee resolved to form subcommittees. These would end up consisting of two or three people each, with Josh K. serving on all of them. The “Community Safety” subcommittee was formed after the parent advocate pointed out the relative dearth of community representation in the room. “School Safety” was intended to find out what “safety related resources” existed in the

⁸³ In retrospect, I was also angry that my own expertise would be ignored. This meeting was my first lesson in the increasing discomfort I would experience when confronted with the limitations of the evaluator’s role. It was also my first close-up look at the power of criminal justice agencies to craft narratives and portraits with the data they collect and almost exclusively command in such settings, to which we shall return below in the sections on QDA and NYPD.

⁸⁴ With the exception of about a dozen young people who were repeatedly recruited as mediators, or crafters of plays about themes of relevance to their lives such as teen pregnancy, safe sex and drug abuse; all themes that relied on youth as decision-makers and responsible individuals who must be strong enough to resist peer pressure.

schools, and what was needed. “Community-Police Relations” only met once, with the NYPD to learn about their programs.⁸⁵

The Community and School Safety committee’s work in the early months was largely done by Rick H., the first liaison from CSD 27, as the spearhead of the “School Safety” subcommittee alongside the principal, and the work could not have been completed as thoroughly, easily or quickly without the pair of them. They contacted every principal from the 14 other schools in the PRYSE project to ask what equipment and programming needs they had (see Table 3.2). In retrospect, the process of learning about school needs may have set up unrealistic expectations, as at least one principal assumed that some of these needs would actually be fulfilled in the form of, for example, requested safety equipment. Only three schools out of 15 would receive equipment, however, as that was all that had been budgeted in the original proposal, and then the construction authority had to make up the difference as the costs were underestimated in the proposal, and no other money was available for this function. As the chart shows, ten of the school principals requested technology, school safety agents or schools aides, the funding for which would come to the district from the SS/HS grant, but was only enough for three schools (these are highlighted in bold). Mediation was also a very popular request, with thirteen out of fifteen principals asking for conflict resolution or mediation services.

⁸⁵ That one subcommittee meeting also included court administrators. On paper the purpose was “to talk about resources of the court and ways to integrate those into PRYSE.” In the end, however, that committee mostly focused on the creation of a Court Resource Center which could be incorporated into the CMO; this incorporation never came to pass.

Table 3.2. Rockaway Principals' Assessments of Needs for School Security Equipment and Programming, as Told to PRYSE, 2001

| School | Programs/equipment they want |
|---------------|--|
| PS 42 | 1. ASPECTS (drug prevention program) 2. Mediation Services 3. Another school safety agent |
| PS 43 | 1. Mediation Services 2. Additional school safety agent 3. Cameras |
| PS 104 | 1. Peer mediation 2. Linkage with Far Rockaway High School (tutoring) 3. Additional school aide 4. Walkie-talkies 5. Repair PA system |
| PS 105 | 1. Someone to work with teachers on reward system for good behavior 2. Conflict resolution |
| PS 106 | 1. Peer mediation and conflict resolution |
| PS 114 | 1. Conflict resolution 2. Cameras |
| PS 183 | 1. Mediation services 2. Additional school safety agent 3. Cameras |
| PS 197 | 1. Mediation Services 2. Three additional school aides 3. Additional school safety agent 4. Cameras |
| PS 215 | 1. Mediation Services 2. After school athletics program 3. AIDP (attendance improvement/dropout prevention) teacher out on injury 4. ASPECTS 5. Family support services 6. Additional school aide 7. Cameras |
| PS 225 | 1. Conflict resolution program 2. Cameras |
| MS 53 | 1. Peer mediation program 2. Victim Services 3. Cameras 4. Additional staff |

| School | Programs/equipment they want |
|------------------|--|
| MS 180 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer mediation 2. After school intramurals 3. Additional school safety agent 4. Additional walkie-talkies 5. Cameras |
| MS 198 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any kind of teen counseling 2. Preventive measures to build positive spirit for school/community, i.e., teams, chorus |
| Beach Channel HS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any mediation services |
| Far Rockaway HS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding for after school clubs (e.g., photography, web-site page club) |

Unfortunately, the representation from the schools dropped off after Rick H. was removed by CSD 27 in early 2001 (and not replaced until September), and our one principal stopped attending when he realized how much work he would be asked to do but without any immediate or perhaps even eventual benefit to his school (or to his position).

The remaining sustained involvement on the committee came only from representatives of PRYSE-funded agencies, and from those representing the positions of greatest influence within their organizations. During the work of the Coalition, the link between CMO and the Family Health Clinic was obvious and sometimes a source of contention among other Coalition partners. By the beginning of the new year in 2001, I was writing myself frustrated notes in the margins of my notepad regarding the work of the committee. One in January read: “I think that it’s a conflict of interest for the group that got the most money to dominate these meetings.”

By that time the Community and School Safety committee was in conflict over a new plan by its co-chairs to “map the needs of the peninsula” (as Josh K.’s favored turn of phrase remained) by way of a survey on the safety concerns of Rockaway residents.

By now Rebecca J., an Assistant District Attorney from the QDA, had begun to regularly attend our meetings, and she was also a big advocate of the survey idea. On behalf of the Evaluation Team, I again found myself in the discomfiting position of arguing *against* a form of outreach. My resistance was twofold: First, I knew from having read the entire proposal, as well as having worked on the public housing community survey for HOPE VI, that there was ample and recent archival data, especially for the neighborhoods in which we were focused. Second, I was well aware that the Evaluation Team, in keeping with our assigned function within the Coalition, was preparing a random-sample telephone survey that would provide generalizable social science data about the exact same subject. We were crafting questions designed specifically to gather data relevant to the work of the Coalition – and furthermore employing the social science methodologies that would help to confer legitimacy from the perspective of potential funding entities. The committee’s proposed survey, by contrast, would have participants select themselves at public meetings, and in effect was intended as a means of educating and organizing the survey participants, rather than producing generalizable data. We had several struggles over what the meaning of a survey is – I repeatedly tried to explain the difference between a sample from which you can generalize and one from which you cannot – as well as struggles over the ends to which the committee leaders intended to put their survey. Eventually my supervisor, one of the co-PIs of the evaluation team, came to the committee. When he learned that they wanted to get a picture of safety concerns, but also spend time interviewing each person, he suggested that they drop their planned survey in favor of focus groups (something I had advocated in an earlier meeting). He also offered to train them in how to run focus groups, and proposed that our team would assist in

analyzing the data. The committee adopted his idea, only to later reject it again in favor of their plan to meet with neighborhood groups such as tenant associations and have them fill out “survey” forms.

In the end, the committee finally acknowledged that their survey’s purpose was to build awareness of PRYSE and if possible extend our network of residents on the peninsula. The earlier proposal of a needs assessment also fell by the wayside as they decided to go ahead with the survey, without my participation. When the issue was finally brought before the Steering Committee in September 2001, Josh K., by then the sole chair of the Community and School Safety committee, explained the situation as follows:

Members of the committee are attempting to conduct a community survey through personal interviews, and wanted Baruch College’s help. Baruch College reported that they could give no official help. Research at the college must undergo scrutiny by the IRB [Institutional Research Board] and no such process has occurred. Everyone is reminded that it is very expensive and time consuming to conduct the type of survey that some of the committee members wish to do.

The Evaluation Team did offer to compile the results, but by then the main players remaining on the committee – the CMO representatives, along with the representatives from the District Attorney’s office – had taken it over as their own, and declined the assistance. Eventually the survey was administered in English and Spanish to an undisclosed number of Rockaway residents, mostly from organizations such as tenant councils. A large box of completed surveys was lost towards the end of February 2002 – no one was ever able to explain what happened to them, nor even how many had been completed – and no data were ever reported, but the tool was used to meet with a variety of groups over the months.

In retrospect, the “survey struggle” was over expertise and ego as much as over how we would spend our time and resources – which of course had been set up with serious limits from the start, given the broad mission and vision of the committee. What was playing out in this and other committees was that individual agency and organizational agendas were finding much more blatant expression than was the case around the wider table of the Coalition Steering Committee. The upshot, generally, was that the chair(s) of each committee very much shaped the agendas. On the Community and School Safety committee, Josh K. used his position in an attempt to build a community court in Far Rockaway, as well as to network with the NYPD and QDA and learn about their programs, all of which could be advantageous to his organization’s growth. While this should not automatically be judged negatively, it moved forward one agenda without the rest of the Coalition necessarily approving or knowing what was happening.⁸⁶

The First Year

PRYSE closed the first year of funded activity with high frustration and a growing, palpable resentment against the school district, which had blossomed under the long wait for funds, regardless of the extent to which they were actually responsible for the process, given budgetary constraints. In a dispatch to Brenda Z. for her report to “the feds,” the Community and School Safety committee chair wrote that aside from the frustration the committee experienced over the survey idea,

⁸⁶ In this case, aside from me. As evaluator I kept track of all activities of my assigned partners: the QDA, NYPD and the mediation organization, as well as the Steering Committee. Indeed, by the end of the project I would be the PRYSE principal investigator in many ways.

another damper on enthusiasm (was) the lack of participation of the Community School District, as this is a school grant, not a community grant. On the other hand, the Queens District Attorney's office and the NYPD have been very strong and on board with this committee (PRYSE Progress Report: January 1 – June 30, 2001, p. 26).

Resentment was also flowing from the school district toward us, however, as the school principals called to participate in the Coalition realized that few funds had been allocated directly to their schools, none under their control, and that their continued participation would not guarantee any future funding. By the beginning of 2001, as we saw, the one principal who consistently participated in meetings no longer came to the table. Cloris G. told me that the principals who consistently made her aware of their needs would get the safety equipment.

Neither the Community and School Safety committee nor the PRYSE Coalition ever met directly with any school safety agents from Rockaway, although their importance as police personnel who work in schools everyday was obvious. The youth officers from the local precincts were more likely to appear at meetings, though with less frequency as the initiative developed and everyone came to learn that meetings could last two hours or more. This was time that few people were happy to devote, especially when it felt as if little was getting done; particularly in the case of the NYPD with its strict accounting of officers' time.

The milestones of that first year (and beyond) were difficult to mark – certainly from an “evaluation perspective” – because none of the partners seemed to grasp, nor did the Evaluation Team seem to effectively communicate, the need to craft “measurable outcomes.” The long argument over the means and meanings of evaluation highlighted the difference between the government's desire for more nuanced *outcomes* in the form

of numbers as evidence of program success, as against the coalition partners' preference for *implementation* of programs as evidence of their own success. As already mentioned, this tension would come to anger even the level-headed Brenda Z., who by the end of the project directed frustration at the Evaluation Team for our not having gathered more quantitative data and thereby, in her view, failing to demonstrate the successes of the Coalition beyond broad counts of participants in programs, and the data from our three-year community survey.

Many actors in the field have had trouble dealing directly with the fact that the kind of change we are trying to achieve is fundamentally about changing power dynamics.

(Kubisch, 2005, p. 24)

CHAPTER 4

Justice, Policing and Mediation: A Look at Three PRYSE Partners

We now examine the three PRYSE partners I covered as an evaluator after my assignment to the Community and School Safety committee: the Queens District Attorney's Office, the Police Department, and the non-profit organization providing community mediation services ("CMO, Inc."). These three groups are related in that they deal with young people on the brink of entering or already inside the criminal justice system. While this chapter looks at the three institutions mainly through their activities as partners in the Rockaways initiative, the discussion will continue in Chapter 6 with a broader look at society-wide developments toward "community" prosecution, policing and mediation strategies as applied to young people.

The Queens District Attorney's Office – In Loco Parentis

Far Rockaway is about eleven miles from the Queens District Attorney's Office at the Queens County Criminal Court in Kew Gardens. The drive averages about 25 minutes, whereas the most direct route by public transportation requires a subway and a bus, and takes about an hour and 30 minutes. During my many visits to the court building – as a professional doing business with the QDA, as a visitor generously invited to bring criminology undergraduate students on a tour of the court by the Community Assistant in the QDA's Office (thanks to my PRYSE involvement), and as a citizen supporting friends facing criminal prosecution – it was always obvious that the mostly young people walking up and down the long set of steps in front of the main entrance are predominantly black and brown.

The court is located on a busy thoroughfare which in the early days of PRYSE was still often called “the Boulevard of Death,” having been notorious for its abundance of speeding vehicles, vulnerable pedestrians and a critical lack of traffic lights.⁸⁷ On any given weekday, almost all of the white people entering and leaving the building wear suits. The Queens Criminal Court building was built in 1961 and retains a feel of that era; the infamous Kitty Genovese murder trial was among those held within its walls.

On entering the grey building, anyone other than an employee or lawyer is directed to several long lines that form before a series of tables in front of the metal detectors. Filing into the building is a no-nonsense process (and was so long before the events of September 11, 2001). The officers speak forcefully and often with undisguised exasperation at the public's lack of knowledge of the regulations. After many years of

⁸⁷ This problem was addressed after 2001 through new signage and cameras to catch speeders.

working with QDA, there was one time when I arrived for a meeting with a woman who single-handedly runs a Youth Court program with the QDA's support. She brought me to a "secret" side entrance, which I had known nothing about, and which required none of the invasive searching and bag inspections. There, those with the appropriate permission (and their name on the guard's list) need only show a photo ID.

On my first visit to the court as a professional evaluator in 2000, my tape recorder was confiscated. I had not known that recording devices are strictly prohibited in the building (and I did not yet know about the privileges of the side door). On my way for a first interview with James S., the Special Prosecutions Director (also known as the Executive Assistant District Attorney), I naively carried the tape recorder I used to interview all participants in the PRYSE project. He later told me that he could not have allowed me to tape our interviews, even if I had received permission to carry a tape recorder. "We *are* lawyers, after all," he remarked. I took my notes by hand.

James S. told me he was interested in preventing youth from entering the criminal justice system as offenders, and instead hoped to involve young people in the system as "good citizens." He described his philosophy of working with young people as that of "gentle indoctrination." He explained that he and the staff at QDA worked directly with young people in an effort to subtly influence their attitudes, thinking and behavior about the police and prosecutors; and to impress upon them the positive impact that "behaving appropriately" would have on their professional futures. He hoped youth could be indoctrinated against violence as a means to solving problems.

The QDA's youth programs centered on doing "fun things with the children," he said, but this recreation was also intended as part of the "gentle indoctrination" against

engaging in violence and on behalf of positive perceptions of the criminal justice system. By having meaningful dialogue with the young people, he and his staff wanted them to get to “know and trust law enforcement.”

PRYSE invited QDA to take part in its projects in 1999, in the course of the original application for a Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant. Beyond the programs funded by the PRYSE Initiative, however, QDA also implemented a career day at a low-performing middle school on the peninsula where, according to Oscar M. (the QDA community liaison hired with PRYSE funds) the “kids are not thinking of a future.” His hope was that the kids could be encouraged to do something when they get out of school, “not apply for welfare.” The QDA staff were convinced – as were several members of law enforcement whom I got to know beyond polite conversation – that the main import, impact and salience of their roles was to be *supplemental parents* to these youth. Adults in these roles were careful to remind me that the youth are not unintelligent and do not have learning disabilities, but that a “disability” perhaps was present in the unfortunate lottery of the parents or guardians they were dealt. “Having someone – the same someone – three days a week asking them questions: this is a large part of it,” said Roger P., the other QDA community assistant hired in part with PRYSE funds. The QDA staff involved in this work were convinced that a parenting or at least mentoring role was their most important impact on the youth in the schools they worked at. They emphasized their roles in providing discipline and consistency for young people (who presumably do not receive it from the adults in their families and neighborhoods).

Within the group of service providers in PRYSE who could rely on relatively consistent funding (as opposed to the more grassroots organizers), and in particular among the QDA staff, I frequently encountered statements like the following:

- *“Parents just don’t come to the school”* (and therefore we must step in where parents are uninvolved).
- *“Parents just don’t get involved enough in school affairs”* (for the service providers to see any evidence of whether they are making headway; measuring outcomes or outputs becomes difficult or impossible).

In reality, these themes are near-universal in social work and social service circles, and serve as a not-so subtle justification for the work these professionals do. The perception is widespread that parents are failing to impose sufficient discipline on their children. A sense of urgency arises among the professionals – especially among the police youth officers, as we will see below – who come to view their mission as putting children in their place and instilling respect for authority. As one teacher in a local elementary school near the housing developments put it to me, “I teach the children who were raised by wolves.”

Among the service providers within the PRYSE Coalition, including QDA, the lack of regular parental involvement in the lives of youth, particularly at school, was clearly associated with the need for families to earn a living wage. If parents need to work, and do so off the Rockaway peninsula, they barely have any time to spend with their children, much less to attend a PTA meeting. For years, participants at PRYSE meetings would raise the idea of providing some kind of financial incentive to parents for taking part in the life of their children’s schools (or in related social programs), but no

attempt was ever made at implementation. The QDA staff actually agreed that parents should be given a stipend. From James S.'s perspective, this would allow the office to directly address the child, as well as to "subtly address the behavior that is problematic," by encouraging parents to participate in school programs.

Adults in Far Rockaway (and in the Ocean Bay housing developments, formerly known as Edgemere and Arverne) do tend to come out for community-wide meetings when these are called in response to a crisis, and these neighborhoods have more than a fair share of crises. The Action Center, the non-profit that was formed during the time PRYSE was operating, would defy the critique of parental involvement by harnessing parents' desire to see their children celebrated, either through artistic performances, or for academic and personal accomplishment. But before this non-profit, formed by a Rockaway parent out of frustration with the public schools, had gotten off the ground, it seemed that crisis was the factor driving community participation. Over the years such community meetings had been prompted by a number of (usually violent) incidents. For example, in February 2002 a family uninvolved in the drug economy had their apartment raided by over two dozen officers of the Queens Narcotics Unit, based on a bad tip from a paid informant. A woman in a local housing development was awakened by Narcotics Officers who, she said, failed to identify themselves as police, and who then held her and her three children in handcuffs for three hours while they ransacked her home looking for drugs that were never found. The NAACP Far Rockaway chapter subsequently called a meeting to address allegations of police misconduct. As we might imagine, the community perception of law enforcement and of the criminal justice system as a whole

become focal points during these high-conflict periods when neighborhood residents' attention and anger were heightened.

At this point, QDA stepped into the public process. A follow-up meeting with community residents was attended by an assistant district attorney, Rebecca J.,⁸⁸ who endeavored to explain procedures for the execution of search warrants. Later, the commanding officer of the NYPD's Queens Borough South region met with three Queens lawmakers: State Senator Malcolm Smith, City Councilman Leroy Comrie and State Assembly member Barbara Clark. The commander admitted that the police had made mistakes, and assured that the warrant execution process would be reviewed in all five boroughs. With regard to the participation of QDA in these meetings, James S. said during an interview, which was also later included verbatim in the June 2002 PRYSE report to "the feds":

There have been several town meetings held in the Rockaways in the past year and the D.A.'s Office has been in attendance and finds there is no acrimony towards our office from the community; trust has been built up over time. One original goal for PRYSE was to develop an understanding between the community and law enforcement, and we can see this goal being realized. Although this relationship is complicated, as being prosecutors is a piece of our role, the trust is coming. People in these communities want criminals out of their neighborhoods. The Queens DA's Office, in building a consistent presence on the peninsula, is educating people about our work and engaging in dialogue with the community (PRYSE Report: January 1 – June 30, 2002, p. 35).

In this case QDA took on the role of a supportive bystander, and incurred no direct wrath for the mistakes of the Narcotics Division. QDA staff members were adamant that what they do in neighborhoods like Far Rockaway is to build trust in the community – meaning trust in representatives of the criminal justice system – by creating

⁸⁸ Also a regular on the PRYSE Community and School Safety Committee, see Chapter 3.

a link first with the children and then with their parents. “We are not there solely to prosecute people or to investigate; we are really there to help them,” one staffer told me. In almost every interview I held with QDA staff, they emphasized that an initiative like PRYSE needed to run for at least five to ten years, rather than the three initially funded, or the four total before it ended. They also told me that money alone cannot solve long-term social problems, and believed that “you need a generation to make changes.” The staff described as follows the daunting obstacles they believed the PRYSE Coalition – and law enforcement and prosecutors in particular – faced in trying to reduce youth violence on the peninsula:

- Parents may tell their children quite explicitly to “*stay away from law enforcement.*”
- A lot of children in Rockaway are not raised by their parents. Many are raised by their grandparents, who tend to have a difficult time with teenagers.
- When conducting the STAR Track curriculum, assistant D.A.’s often ask their classes how many of them know someone who has been arrested. A sweeping majority of the youth raise their hands.

In other words, negative involvement with the criminal justice system is viewed as normal in the neighborhood. But like Brenda Z. and Cloris G., the QDA representatives were focused on changing the culture of Rockaways by concentrating on the “gentle indoctrination” of youth to a more positive view of the criminal justice system without acknowledgement that their lived experience of that system might outweigh even the best-intentioned, intelligent and caring representative’s attempts to change their perspective.

In the first year of the PRYSE project in Far Rockaway, QDA received about \$90,000 in federal funding for its involvement in four youth-focused programs, and to pay half the salary for Oscar M., whose attention centered on the Rockaways. Between June 2000 and May 2004 (the entirety of the three-year initial grant period plus the no-cost extension), QDA received \$264,600. QDA also engaged in other initiatives that were not directly funded by PRYSE, but that nevertheless had their accomplishments promoted in evaluations of the PRYSE Coalition.

QDA joined the PRYSE proposal to the SS/HS grant with a plan to “emphasize responsible decision making and choices” for youth; to advance James S.’s “gentle indoctrination” of youth on the desirability of living a healthy and violence-free life; and to provide opportunities to get children off the peninsula and into other parts of the city to experience a wider world of possibility. A further goal included developing trust between Rockaway residents and the QDA to encourage cooperation from residents, as well as to promote a positive image of the work of prosecutors.

The main QDA-initiated programs funded by PRYSE were the following:

Queens Child Advocacy Center. PRYSE funded half the salary of an Assistant D.A. working at the Queens Child Advocacy Center developed by QDA. This center was intended to provide a “child-friendly” atmosphere for children believed to be victims of abuse. Until then, children in abuse investigations were forced to recount their tales repeatedly to the representatives of various agencies; this was now centralized in one office. The advocacy center is staffed among others by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a child-welfare service-provider in Queens, the NYPD, Administration for Children's Services, and QDA which “coordinates investigations of child sexual/physical abuse.”

Expansion of school anti-violence program. The QDA received PRYSE funds to hire two full-time community assistants for its school anti-violence program: Oscar M. and Roger P. Oscar M. worked directly with students in local public schools as the coordinator of the QDA’s pre-existing “STAR Track” program (“Straight Talk About Risks”), an anti-

violence curriculum. Roger P. orchestrated the annual “Say NO to Violence, Say YES to Tennis” event held with the United States Tennis Association. About 1,000 students in the “STAR Track” program receive several hours of tennis instruction in the program, which was first held in 1999 before the office’s participation in PRYSE had begun (“Rockaway Students,” 2006). At the event one year, the Queens DA explained that it is “meant to encourage our young people to choose sports as a positive alternative to violence.”⁸⁹ It is also considered to give Rockaway youth an opportunity to travel safely out of the peninsula (in the presence of police officers). Even Rockaway residents seem to regard leaving the peninsula as an exceptional occurrence, for either children or adults. Having a police escort is seen as a safe way to do so.

Operation Summer Fun. QDA and NYPD initiated this program of summer field trips several years before PRYSE began partly funding it. Youth officers escort young people from the 101st Precinct to two recreational events each week, such as trips to museums, movies or sporting events. Once again, the intent in part is to expose youth in the 11-17 age group to law enforcement in a “positive” way, as well as to get them out of the neighborhood on a regular basis.

Summer Youth Employment Program. The QDA screens and hires about ten teenagers to do clerical work for 20 hours a week at a salary of \$5.25 an hour for an eight-week assignment at the QDA or another county agency, such as the Office of the Borough President or the Queens Borough Public Library. The students are supervised closely on “business demeanor and attire, punctuality, responsibility and technical skills,” according to a member of the program’s staff. Training sessions are given, “designed to teach proper work ethics and appropriate office demeanor, as well as job search, interviewing skills and resume writing” (PRYSE Progress Report, January – June 2003, p. 33). As with the other proposed activities, the job is also meant to increase their familiarity with law enforcement.

As conceived under the PRYSE proposal, QDA also worked with the School

Safety Division of the NYPD (which has provided all of the security in the city’s public

⁸⁹ Recreational activities were among the most-requested items in our community survey, with parents and focus groups, and with teens and adults alike. The aforementioned 1998 *Los Angeles Times* expose by Frammolino (see Chapter 3, Note 62) that caused controversy over Education Department spending had mocked the use of federal funds on programs such as magicians and fishing courses; the scandal involving Flores (Chapter 1, Note 25) brought further derision at the notion that golf prevents violence. I confess on occasion to have found it corny when such freighted talk was attached to “mere” tennis lessons. And yet these events were one small way of encouraging young people in the Rockaways, and in other neighborhoods that are isolated and resource-poor, to try something they might not otherwise have an opportunity to try.

schools since 1998) in developing “safety corridors” patrolled by NYPD youth officers before and after school, on the routes most frequently traveled by students from the subway to school.

PRYSE also partly subsidized the salary for an Assistant D.A. assigned to investigate and “ride” gang-related cases. A prosecutor “rides a case” if he or she takes it from the original incident report through its final disposition in court (Oscar M., personal communication, February 28, 2007). This Assistant D.A. responded to calls from the NYPD on a 24-hour basis and primarily handled non-fatal shootings within the 101st Precinct. He was also notified of any school-related incidents in that area involving drugs, guns or gangs (as was another Assistant D.A. from the QDA’s Career Criminal/Major Crimes Bureau). During the PRYSE initiative, the PRYSE-subsidized ADA was involved *in almost every case* prosecuted in the Rockaway peninsula.

Although the NYPD relies heavily on data to allocate resources and articulate its work, the QDA reps within PRYSE showed more concern than the police to interpret the police-provided data in justifying their own strategies as PRYSE partners:

The Assistant District Attorney tracks crime in the 101st precinct as well as community reports of shootings (Far Rockaway has the highest incidence of shootings citywide). Every new arrest in the 101st precinct is monitored by one of the full time community assistants as well. The Queens DA office further met with the NYPD gang unit to discuss increased tracking of gang activity (PRYSE Progress Report: January 1 – June 30, 2001, p. 13).

In 2002, QDA also highlighted the work of one of the community assistants whose responsibilities included attending tenant association presidents’ meetings, precinct community council meetings and community district meetings, but also more directly prosecutorial functions, although he was not a lawyer, nor a law enforcement

officer: he was “responsible for tracking criminal information and patterns regarding persistent offenders, with the aim of enhancing prosecution of these matters” (PRYSE Report: January 1 - June 30, 2002, p. 34).

That same year the office received a Community Gun Violence Prosecution Program grant through the “Project Safe Neighborhoods” launched by the then-attorney general, John Ashcroft (James S., personal communication, May 16, 2002). During that meeting, James S. described how they translated the logic of that program to the Rockaways as

using geo-mapping to look at crime density by precinct and tracking arrests for the peninsula and making use of deterrent sentences. Monitoring cases is one part of improving the quality of life for people in the Rockaways. An improved quality of life will help attract businesses to the area.

The people of a neighborhood may disagree as to who constitutes a desirable or undesirable member of the community. But a District Attorney’s office will tend to feel far more certain about which members of a community constitute legitimate targets for law enforcement. Around the table of the PRYSE Coalition meetings, however, there was surprisingly little discussion about the presence of the District Attorney in public schools and other community spaces. In all public stances, the D.A.’s participation was taken for granted and treated as a self-evidently good thing; however, reservations were voiced to me by many in private, even by QDA staff themselves.⁹⁰

Of course, the PRYSE Steering Committee tended to avoid any debate that might be perceived as antagonistic; even a small amount of agitation at a Steering Committee

⁹⁰ Chapter 6 tells the story of one such case, which occurred after the QDA and NYPD organized a new Rockaway Truancy Center (not a PRYSE program). QDA staff saw themselves forced to restrain certain police officers from treating the Center as a “stop and shop” for picking up youth on warrants and suspicions.

meeting might be perceived as far too controversial to bear. But even in the local paper, where contributors did occasionally raise questions about police powers and the criminal justice system, the friendly involvement of prosecutors in the everyday life of neighborhood youth was never given critical examination. While I give critical examination to these questions as a sociologist, which shall occupy us in Chapter 6, my role as evaluator, particularly as one associated with a university, was fraught with constraints that I could not negotiate to my own satisfaction. Individual representatives from the organizations in the PRYSE Coalition, as well as local residents not affiliated with a specific group, would routinely find frustration in the constraints of their roles, which, I argue, were usually unavoidable given the structure and goals of the initiative. The important or at least public PRYSE gatherings were headlined by persons far removed from the everyday work – such as the District Attorney, the executive director of the Family Health Clinic, or the police captains – who suffered none of the discomforts of negotiating these priorities; at least, not in this arena. They were managers and supervisors, but not street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980).

A Perspective on the QDA “STAR Track” Program

Oscar M., more than any of the other QDA staff to my knowledge, spent countless hours on the peninsula working with local coalitions and alliances as well as at local middle schools as a supervisor of STAR Track, one of the programs for which QDA received salary subsidies from PRYSE. The original “Straight Talk About Risks” (STAR) curriculum was developed for children in grades K through 12 by the Center to

Prevent Handgun Violence in 1992.⁹¹ QDA took the STAR curriculum and made the program into STAR Track, with the “Track” incorporating other strategies to address violence in the Rockaways, particularly those involving Assistant D.A.s in the classrooms on a weekly basis.

In a 2004 interview, near the very end of PRYSE, Oscar M. explained how he spent the bulk of his time in the public schools. It is clear in his narrative that he is occupying a criminal justice role alongside a modified social worker role:

I've done that [STAR Track] at the middle school from 2001 until last year when I did several classrooms, mostly seventh-grade students who tend to be the generation of students that are lost, the sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grades, before they make that transition to high school. I focused on them, dealing with a lot of issues in the schools, for every single gang-related or parent issue. If there was an arrest made at the school, I knew about it. One way or another, whether they notified me or I found out through our system in the office.

And now, I've moved my focus onto the other middle school, with the truancy. Our office runs the Truancy Center, but we subcontracted that work to Police Athletic League [PAL], so they handle the day-to-day operations but we handle a lot more of the supervision. When I was looking at some of the statistics coming out of the Truancy Center a lot of the students... of that middle school were seventh and eighth graders. So my focus has been going into that school and doing STAR Track and outreaching to some of those kids. I'm still going out to the Truancy Center and visiting the Center, which has allowed me... [to target] which classes and what schools the kids go to. And then targeting if there was an entity within the school already, like say [the Community Mediation Organization], or Safe Space, helping them make the linkage between the school, Safe Space and PAL, so they make the appropriate service delivery for that student.

STAR Track sought to enhance school safety by having both the District Attorney's Office, which prosecutes crimes committed by adults, and the Corporation

⁹¹ The Center was renamed The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 2001. President Ronald Reagan's press secretary James Brady was shot and sustained a serious head wound during John Hinckley's 1981 attempt on the president's life.

Counsel's Office, which handles juvenile delinquency cases in Family Court, "red flag" certain types of crimes committed on school grounds for special attention. These cases generally involve firearms, drugs, gangs, or all three. As we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7, however, in the Rockaways most of the violence in schools has less to do with gang affiliation and more to do with disputes over interpersonal slights, real and perceived, despite a widespread perception that gangs dominate several neighborhoods of the peninsula.⁹²

In Rockaway schools, the STAR Track curriculum varies by grade level. The focus in elementary schools is on "how to make choices in life." In middle school, attention turns to "conduct and criminal consequences." Finally, in high school, there is a "more open discussion" that includes themes of sex, drugs and violence, and that is supposed to be confidential, focusing on "why kids do what they do." The QDA community assistants and ADAs agreed that in high school, both by intent and in practice, STAR Track becomes more of a "mentoring" program.

According to promotional material from QDA, STAR Track sends 32 assistant district attorneys into eight public schools on the Rockaway peninsula "to teach children about the risks of drugs and guns, [doing so] in partnership with educators and parents. The program uses a curriculum designed to drive down the crime rate and build up self-esteem, confidence and the quality of life." This accords with the philosophy of community prosecution.⁹³ To project an image and embrace a strategy that moves away from the dominant "just deserts" practice of punishment and incapacitation, and toward a

⁹² The murder of Tommy Johnson, detailed in Chapter 5, is an example.

⁹³ On which more in Chapter 6.

more rehabilitative or at least preventive ethic. As Oscar M. explained to me in 2004, with regard to his role as a community assistant:

I'm more moving away from the traditional "lock them up" mentality to more of the underlying social issues... more of the preventive end. And see that we can have more success in doing that as opposed to the prosecutorial end. We have an excellent working relationship with [the New York City Law Department] Corporation Counsel, which handles all the family court cases. And a lot of these cases are really [about] underlying issues. If a kid is acting out in school it's not really because he's acting out and he wants attention, but there may be some issues for him going on at home where it's an outcry for help. It just happens to be the outlet where he is actually getting the attention that's happening. So I'm looking more in that end.⁹⁴

Again, Oscar M. reinforces the idea that his role is of a modified social worker, but this despite the fact that he is neither a trained social worker, nor acknowledging directly that he comes to the task with the full weight of the state behind him. But on the other hand, projects like PRYSE exposed Oscar M. to a wide variety of social services about which he may have been unfamiliar lacking this experience. Returning to STAR Track: the literature does not indicate that the STAR curriculum has been subject to very much critical or empirical scrutiny in print. An experimental test of the STAR curriculum found that it did not significantly reduce firearm play among preschool and school-aged children. In that study, a group of children aged four to seven went through a one-week STAR program. Afterwards, these children were found to be as likely as those in a control group to pick up and play with guns left in an "unsupervised" but observed play room (the study used a toy gun as well as a real, disarmed automatic). The

⁹⁴ The Corporation Counsel is part of the Law Department of New York City. As their website explains, "The New York City Law Department is responsible for all of the legal affairs of the City. It represents the City, the Mayor, other elected officials, and the City's many agencies in all affirmative and defensive civil litigation as well as juvenile delinquency prosecutions brought in Family Court and Administrative Code enforcement proceedings brought in Criminal Court" (About the Law Department, n.d.).

authors wrote that their data “indicate that firearm safety programs may be a sometimes expensive attempt to be politically correct in a culture in which firearm violence is perceived by some to be a serious problem” (Hardy, 2002, p. 6).

By contrast, there is compelling research to suggest that Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) programs hold the promise of altering some criminal justice patterns.⁹⁵ Oscar M. offered that in his experience, programs eschewing the “lock them up” mentality were widespread in the system in New York City, and not at all unique to the QDA, a perception with which I disagreed. Oscar M. described it as a change in culture:

I think it's more an overall culture, in terms of that's where we're moving; because we know that if you keep arresting a youth it's predictable. You let him go to a juvenile detention facility, he is there for a period of time until he is finally tried, throughout the entire ordeal... instead of getting services... he may get some preliminary services, but I don't think he's getting the kind of extensive services that he would need that would help correct the behavior. And I think if you have the kind of services that he needs now in the preventive end that help him along the way, you can... have a lot more reduction in terms of the incarceration rates for juveniles going into the system.

The New York Police Department – Off the Shelf

As the reader by now is well aware, SS/HS grant requirements mandated that school districts partner with local law enforcement, a recognized public mental health agency, and a juvenile justice agency or entity. A police officer from the NYPD Grant Development Office, Laura Jane B., was on the team that wrote the original PRYSE proposal. Both of the precincts headquartered on the Rockaway peninsula – the 101st in

⁹⁵ On which, again, more in Chapter 6.

Far Rockaway and the 100th in Rockaway Beach⁹⁶ – and a Transit District⁹⁷ on the Western end were included for participation, and therefore funding, by the PRYSE grant.

According to the NYPD section of the original PRYSE proposal, the goal was “to enhance safety of targeted schools and surrounding neighborhoods through a combination of community policing tactics and additional safety personnel and equipment.” The department – echoing the intentions of the QDA’s office – also pledged to offer “educational and recreational opportunities to expose youth to law enforcement officers and promote positive relations.” The precincts’ proposal setting out what the NYPD would do during the grant period consisted of programs that were already in operation, such as Law Enforcement Explorers, the Police Athletic League youth programs, and the well-known and highly controversial D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education). In short, they took a variety of existing programs and initiatives off the shelf and packaged them together in the name of safety and health of youth on the peninsula. Their stated goals were more clearly, perhaps honestly, in the self-interest of their own institution than was the case with other partners: “The NYPD’s goals are address safe passage from school to home, as well as to offer educational and recreational opportunities to expose

⁹⁶ To review the geography from Chapter 2, this time with the police precincts in mind: The neighborhoods within the 100th Precinct are Arverne, Belle Harbor, Breezy Point, Broad Channel, Neponsit, Rockaway Park and Roxbury, with a combined population of approximately 40,000 people according to the 2000 census. (See Fig. 2.1 or Fig. 2.8 for locations of the Rockaway neighborhoods, and Fig. 2.5 for the boundaries of the police precincts.) The 100th Precinct encompasses approximately 3.57 square miles with 25 miles of waterfront and is primarily a residential area of apartment buildings and one- and two-family homes. There are 22 religious institutions. The 101st Precinct is on the Eastern end of the Rockaway Peninsula and encompasses an area of 2.5 square miles with 2.5 miles of Atlantic Ocean Beach Front, .5 square miles of park area, 54.3 miles of street and 2.1 miles of elevated subway line. This residential area with one- and two-family homes also holds two major oceanfront apartment complexes (Wave Crest and Ocean Village) and a large high-rise for senior citizens. There are also four Housing Authority developments: Redfern, the 40's Houses, and Edgemere and Arverne (now combined as Ocean Bay). There are six nursing homes, few small businesses, and no major industry. There are five health-related facilities, including the only two hospitals (Peninsula General and St. John's Episcopal) serving the peninsula. Over 60,000 residents live in the 101st precinct and there are 26 diverse religious institutions.

⁹⁷ The New York City Transit Police and the Housing Authority Police were merged into the NYPD under the Giuliani administration in 1995.

youth to law enforcement officers and promote positive relations” (quotes from PRYSE proposal, 1999, p. 16).

Over the three years of PRYSE funding the NYPD directly received \$351,828 for school and precinct-based programs.⁹⁸ The money helped to fund or expand the following off-the-shelf programs:

Safe Corridors. PRYSE funds paid overtime hours for afternoon police patrols to “ensur[e] safe routes for students on their way home from school” on school days. This allowed the addition of an extra officer to be present during dismissal of the two high schools and three intermediate schools in the area. The corridors were discontinued when funding ended.

GREAT. The “Gang Reduction Education and Training” program conducted eight-week classroom training sessions for middle-school students drawn from the project housing still known at the time as Edgemere and Arverne. GREAT was founded in the early 1990s by a partnership between the Phoenix Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. A trained police officer works with youths believed to be “at risk” of involvement in gangs and offers instruction and counseling to deter involvement. The “program’s primary objective is prevention and is intended as an immunization against delinquency, youth violence, and gang membership” (Welcome to the G.R.E.A.T. Website, 2007). In Far Rockaway under PRYSE, the program was operated after school in the 101st Precinct at one elementary and two middle schools. Schools in the 100th Precinct wanted the program during school hours, but the NYPD did not have staff for it. Eventually, the school district dropped the program.

C.H.A.M.P.S. or “Cops Helping Adolescents to get Motivated and Prepared for Success” was funded to focus on “leadership, responsibility, communication, conflict resolution, diversity, decision making, consequences and team building.” Two officers meeting with elementary school children after school held what they called “rap sessions” on “gang resistance, drug abuse and awareness, leadership, responsibility, conflict resolution and ‘Say No To Sexual Abuse’” (NYPD report to PRYSE, 2004). Police also offered a Mentoring Program at the local elementary school and individual tutoring; a side benefit for the NYPD was that the program built “a positive relationship between the police and local youth” (NYPD report to PRYSE, 2003). Laura Jane B. had said that without continued funding, the program could not continue after PRYSE.

⁹⁸ Funding for the safety equipment at schools went not to the NYPD but directly to the school district.

Athletics. The PRYSE proposal also earmarked funds for the Police Athletic League of the 100th Precinct to purchase basketball equipment, uniforms and trophies for summer sports leagues for 70 community children at IS 180.⁹⁹ Additional funds were allocated for a precinct basketball league and a youth outreach program for about 50 boys (ages 12 through 20) residing at a Catholic foster home on the peninsula. The foster home outreach program was created to “seek to keep the community informed of recent problems with youth at this residence and to follow up on steps taken to address these problems and find ways for the Boys Home to better interact with the community” (NYPD section of PRYSE proposal, 1999).

D.A.R.E. “Drug Abuse Resistance Education” programs send police officers into classrooms to conduct anti-drug curricula. D.A.R.E. was originally introduced in Los Angeles public schools in 1983 by the then-chief of police, Daryl Gates. Evaluation results support the conclusion that these expensive initiatives – thought of as a demand-side drug control strategy of the War on Drugs – do nothing to prevent drug abuse; some studies even found that D.A.R.E. actually results in increased drug use among youth (see Kanof, 2003, for a federally-initiated review of six major D.A.R.E. evaluations). The U.S. Department of Education ended funding for D.A.R.E. programs in 2001, although the D.A.R.E. website, with a 1996 copyright, still maintains as of early 2011 that the program is “being implemented in 75 percent of our nation's school districts and in more than 43 countries around the world” (D.A.R.E., 1996, para. 2). The program now calls itself the “new D.A.R.E.”¹⁰⁰ These controversies were never mentioned by anyone at PRYSE meetings, however. A search of the archives of the local Rockaway paper revealed no articles about D.A.R.E. PRYSE funding permitted the NYPD to add seminars to the existing D.A.R.E. programs at area schools. The NYPD used the money to pay overtime to officers for their participation.

⁹⁹ The Police Athletic League (PAL) describes itself as an independent non-profit organization, and it is also “the official youth agency of the New York City Police Department.” According to its own literature, it does not receive any *direct* funding from the NYPD, although it is clear that individual precincts sponsor events (Police Athletic League, 2005). And PAL in Rockaway would also receive funding through the QDA’s office and the Weed & Seed project. Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau served as the chairman of the PAL board; the president was Robert McGuire, former New York police commissioner and later a director of the theme-park company Six Flags, Inc.

¹⁰⁰ As recently as November 2006, a sheriff’s race in Southern Maryland was thought to have rested on one candidate’s pledge to reinstitute the program after its cancellation. The *Washington Post* wrote: “Studies by the National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office, and independent researchers over the past 20 years have repeatedly shown that young adults who went through D.A.R.E. are just as likely to use drugs as those who did not” (Greenwell, 2006).

“Slowly, With Your Hands Up, Drop to Your Knees” – A Traffic Stop With Law Enforcement Explorers

Of all the PRYSE-funded projects, however, the Law Enforcement Explorers seemed to inspire the most enthusiasm among the officers I interviewed. Explorers programs are organized nationwide by “Learning for Life,” a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Boy Scouts of America, to provide an introduction to seven types of careers through workplace visits for boys and girls ages 14 to 17. Learning for Life defines its mission as “to enable young people to become responsible individuals by teaching positive character traits, career development, leadership, and life skills so they can make ethical choices and achieve their full potential” (Learning for Life, 2004). Exploring is considered a “work site based program” (Learning for Life, 2005).

Learning for Life also provides lesson plans for kindergarten through high school on topics ranging from emergency preparedness to pet care. As its website highlights, this curriculum was evaluated and received the endorsement of the director of the Boston University Center for the Advancement of Ethics and Character, Kevin Ryan, who is also a member of the Pontifical Academy of the Social Sciences. Based on data from 2,500 students at 59 schools nationwide, Ryan found that teachers reported significant improvement in their pupils’ behavior after eight lessons. The behaviors that teachers were asked to observe and report included “works well with others, is honest, has high self-worth and other important values” (Syndics Research Corporation and Ryan, 2005).¹⁰¹ Exploring programs have not been formally assessed, but Learning for Life

¹⁰¹ In evaluation, however, claims of success must always be interpreted cautiously. Under close scrutiny, many of the data advanced prove dubious; as, for example, when teachers are asked to measure changes in “honesty” (defined as though it is necessarily an observable behavior) within eight class sessions. And evaluations of success are often based on successful implementation of a program – as was largely the case with PRYSE – rather than measured program impacts.

also claims they address a variety of critical elements that research has deemed essential to healthy youth development, including “strong personal values and character,” “a desire to learn,” and “social adeptness” (Learning for Life, 2005). Learning for Life and organizations like it are engaging in what was once called “moral education” and in recent decades was renamed “character education” to allay concerns about the religious undertones of “morality.”

Law Enforcement Exploring focuses on five “experience areas”: character education, life skills, service learning, leadership experience, and career. The NYPD “Academy for Explorers” curriculum goes beyond classroom instruction to include some field experience at law enforcement facilities. There are lessons in the basics of crime scene investigation, domestic dispute intervention, and felony traffic stops.¹⁰²

PRYSE paid for the hours spent by police officers in Explorer sessions, and also bought cadet uniforms for participants. An average of 125 Rockaway youth participated in Explorers in each of the four years funded by PRYSE. The NYPD also hosts “Junior Investigators,” a form of Law Enforcement Exploring that serves a younger group of children (ages 11 to 14) and emphasizes “developing leadership skills, making a positive decision, consequences these children face daily and how to deal with them, as well as problem solving” (NYPD descriptions for PRYSE website, 2001). During three years of PRYSE an average of 53 children were participating in Junior Investigators in any given quarter.

¹⁰² Many agencies take part in “Law Enforcement Exploring” work in New York City, including “the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs Service, New York City Police Department, New York State MTA Police, AMTRAK Police, New York City Department of Correction, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Secret Service, and U.S. Marshals Service” (Law Enforcement Exploring, n.d.).

In evaluating the success of Explorers, the NYPD did not consider whether it had any impact on measures of youth crime. As a participating youth officer told me, the “mandate for Explorers is to maintain a C average in school and avoid police interaction.” Youth who failed to meet these expectations were placed on the program’s version of probation, i.e., given a warning that their next offense would see them expelled. The officers in Explorer programs report any changes in student status to the Explorer Unit supervisor for the whole of New York City. My informant was clear that his task included educating students in the law. In the past, he explained, there had been a more “open door policy” in recruitment and participation, but after the introduction of the citywide unit supervisor in 1995, young people in the Exploring programs were expected to maintain NYPD-set academic and personal standards if they were serious about entering law enforcement in the future.

As a member of the PRYSE Evaluation Team, I sometimes visited funded programs to observe implementation. One cloudy afternoon I arrived at the 101st Precinct in Far Rockaway to meet with the youth officer supervising Law Enforcement Explorers. As the NYPD was consistently enthusiastic about the program, and had highlighted its achievements in every PRYSE evaluation report, I wanted to get a first-hand look. I came to understand that the NYPD considered the Explorers program to be one of their “most effective public relations tools,” (a comment from retired Chief of Department Louis Anemone) because of the interactions between youth and police (Olmeda, 1999, p. 1). The program served as a public relations tool because of the way that officers and youth alike spread its message to adults in New York City. Although not publicly stated, it is also quite clearly a very early recruitment tool.

The Explorers were scheduled to have a weekly meeting, which typically included an introduction to basic police procedures and military drills. I arrived to find the youth officers and six teenage Explorers, two African American and two Latina young women, and the rest African American young men, outside in a large parking lot next to the precinct. I was introduced to everyone; the Explorers wore uniforms consisting of NYPD blue polo shirts; they indeed resembled very young officers from dress to demeanor. Before the exercise, the white youth officer asked if I would participate as the felon in a felony car stop. How could I say no?

Two youth entered a police car parked in the lot and I climbed into the youth officer's personal vehicle set up just in front of the police car. The youth were told to imagine that while on patrol they had received a radio call regarding a suspect who had just left a local store where she had committed an armed robbery. They were going to spot the vehicle described by the police dispatcher and command the driver to stop. They must follow police procedures – spelled out by the youth officer – to get the suspect out of the car and onto the ground, where she would be handcuffed.

I sat in the driver's seat of the vehicle, while two Explorers – a male and a female, both African American and in their mid-teens – sat in the police cruiser. Several people hanging out on the sidewalks of the street had a clear view of our play. Although our vehicles remained stationary, we were to pretend we were moving; the Explorers in the patrol car turned on the siren, and used the loud speaker to instruct me to pull over (I had the car running). I was told to put my hands up while in my seat. Then I was instructed to use my right hand to turn off the car, and to toss the keys out the window with my left. When I was finally instructed on how to step out of the vehicle, I was told to get on my

knees with my hands on my head, which I did. I was actually quite shaken by the realism of the situation, including the fake yet very realistic-looking guns being held up at me by the young Explorers. I was handcuffed, placed face down on the front of the vehicle and frisked before being led into the back of the patrol car.

The youth officer reviewed the scene with the Explorers – participants and observers – to point out where slight errors in judgment, position or commands could turn a routine stop into a dangerous one. The Explorers were being prepared not only for a potential future career but more immediately for an upcoming Explorer competition. These events are attended by thousands of youth from all 50 states and include competitions on “robbery in progress,” “felony car stops” and “domestic disturbance resolutions.” Many of them can be watched on video uploaded to sites like YouTube. Some communities hold Exploring trials as sporting events, complete with bleachers full of fans cheering, the theme song from Miami Vice and popcorn as mock felons are torn from mini-vans with police-trained German Shepherd dogs.

In Rockaway, I would never hear a negative word spoken in public about Exploring. But as time passed I would become more intimately familiar with the frustrations and hostility residents held against the police, particularly in their close contact with young people. Other communities around the nation eliminated Law Enforcement Exploring when it was discovered that Exploring programs run by police had a higher rate of sex abuse cases than Exploring programs run by any other profession (within those programs supervised by Learning for Life). After three cases involving male police officers engaging in sexual conduct with female teenagers in the program, Law Enforcement Exploring changed its policies to include more thorough background

checks on adult participants, as well as restricting the hours during which young people could ride along with police (Lopez, 2006). Another study had reported on thirty-two earlier cases of abuse of Explorer participants by officers over a six-year period. Five of these involved sexual molestation of boys and many involved multiple offenders or victims. The analysis covered only cases in which some official action was taken, leaving out other allegations against officers that did not lead to sanctions (Walker and Irlbeck, 2003). To be clear, there was no evidence of abusive or illegal activity taking place within the Explorer and Junior Investigator programs of the PRYSE project. Nor do the findings above necessitate a conclusion to eliminate Explorer-type programs within law enforcement. But the findings do speak to the well-documented potential of police abuse of authority (situated within abuse of authority in all hierarchical organizations and institutions), as well as patterns of abusive and even brutal police behavior that has led to public mistrust of police.

The Blue Wall and the Totem Pole

Combined with the authority officers command, the secrecy, loyalty and sense of brotherhood common to police (and other male-dominated and rigidly hierarchical institutions) in the United States creates a social space with the potential for abuse of authority as well as collusion to ignore or minimize abusive behavior. Police are also notoriously threatened and angered by public suggestions that their conduct is less than professional. Calls from academics and activists alike for true police accountability include the awareness that public trust is hard won without a commitment to open and honest responses to concerns over police behavior and tactics.

One need not spend much time working with and around police to confront the invisible yet palpable blue wall of silence: Much of what police officers said to me during my five years of work in the Rockaways was either so “on the record” as to seem pre-recorded, or was so “off the record” as to leave me unable to figure out how to render any stories intelligible because I was asked never to divulge them. It also became clear that despite the confidences I believed I enjoyed because of my proximity and relatively friendly interactions with officers, there were undoubtedly stories, perceptions and experiences that I would never hear.

Police speak in a language akin to the military: crisp, focused and without much speculation as they are trained to concern themselves mostly with facts and observable behaviors. Yet, their moral opinions are offered regularly and without hesitation as they comprise the role of being the long arm of the law. Moral opinions of youth officers are taken for granted as non-negotiable, and indeed as fixed and beyond the grasp of average citizens. Ironically, for all the frustrations that police would share with me during interviews (and sometimes at public gatherings) about how little the average civilian knows or understands what it means to be an officer, officers were just as out of touch with the preoccupations and priorities of many Rockaway residents. The youth officers I came to know best explained that although they were absent from many public meetings (technically the police were required at every PRYSE meeting) it did not much impact their participation in the Coalition, because even “if we’re not there we know what our role is – and we can’t get involved with disagreement and infighting” (“Lanrick,” personal communication, 2003).

More interesting than what police said to me over the years was what they failed to say. The absence of police officers around the table at both PRYSE and other community meetings was conspicuous in comparison with other participants. Although the tragic events of September 11, 2001 changed the availability of officers – this is what we were told by NYPD representatives at meetings convened after that date – officers were also often absent from meetings before the attacks. The police mission is simple, in a sense, and the hierarchy of the department is certainly crystal-clear. In the end, such rigidity is anathema to the flexibility required by the fluctuations of community needs and concerns. It may even be anathema to working in any coalition or partnership outside the criminal justice system, or even within it, as we will see in the tensions that arose between the district attorney’s office and law enforcement in the truancy center. Nevertheless, the police committed to a very specific set of tasks when they entered the PRYSE partnership, and maintained that work even when they were absent from the larger flow of debate or considerations of the future of the Coalition after the funding period ran out. Because sustainability was so important to the federal government, but also because the government required the participation of law enforcement in PRYSE, and with the benefit of hindsight, the police – at least in a city like New York – could never be relied upon to be full participants in an effort that required subtlety and finesse in the changing circumstances of a neighborhood, as well as with the groups and organizations around the partner table.

The mandate that officers must follow is more rigid and specific than most social service workers, and despite their ability to summon the force of the State – a clear and indisputable power – any officer sent to attend meetings in a “community” is likely to be

the least empowered to make decisions in the moment, or to speak out of personal experience in that community beyond their professional role. Youth officers are seen as “lowest on the precinct totem pole,” a reality which almost every youth officer recounted to me. They are stuck, it would seem, in a practically impenetrable hierarchy – law enforcement institutions – which makes the flexibility required in community initiatives impossible, and even more contentious than for other participants. Yet again the power of the State is clear: despite the federal requirement to participate, individual police officers did not actually have a say in their own meeting attendance. Their superiors could always point to a higher mission requiring their attention which no one around the table, except perhaps the District Attorney’s Office, had the standing to question or criticize.

While the NYPD did not receive the lion’s share of PRYSE money by any means, the grants officer involved with crafting the PRYSE proposal, P.O. Laura Jane B., was well-connected within NYPD and also within circles of influence on the Rockaway peninsula. She led Weed & Seed for several years, and police representation at Weed & Seed, as at PRYSE, was strong during her tenure only because of her presence. Uniformed officers – those working most closely with youth on the peninsula – were rarely seen at PRYSE meetings beyond the first few.

Youth Officers and PRYSE

One white NYPD youth officer, Donald M., came often to the early PRYSE meetings. He oversaw Law Enforcement Explorers and other programs in his precinct and was thoughtful, intelligent and flexible with the young people with whom I saw him

work. He discussed his work with me at length in a series of interviews during the three years of PRYSE. Eventually he was promoted and transferred out of the precinct to work at One Police Plaza.

The officer was certain that the way discipline was handled in public schools – often through suspension or detention in classrooms grouping all students who had acted out together for days at a time – left no room for young people to examine what they had been doing that got them in such a situation in the first place. He was convinced that in these cases young people were behaving in ways designed to prompt a reaction from adults; the reactions often involved suspension or even arrest, depending upon the level of danger associated with the behavior. The officer wanted to spend time with youth to help create what he called “a place to separate ‘this is you’ and ‘this is what you’re doing’” (Donald M., personal communication, 2001).

The other youth officer who worked with the younger children in Junior Investigators, Lanrick, was younger than Donald M. and was African American. He saw his role, much like the QDA staff discussed earlier, as an active contradiction to poor parenting. In his experience, “many parents don’t care or don’t do what needs to be done.” He was particularly critical that so many of the parents of children in the Rockaways “all want to be ‘best friends’ with their kids, not parents.” During one interview, in February 2002, he reflected on his own mother: she had taught him “about limits, structure and discipline as a young person.” Placing one hand out flat at eye level, parallel to the floor, and his other out flat waist high, he said, “Kids need to know their place; the parent is here” (moving up the top hand) “and the kid is here” (moving down the bottom hand). He clarified that he did not mean to “demean children or anything” but

that you had to make sure children understood limits. At this point, we were joined by the other youth officer from the precinct, Donald M. I asked about the young people they typically worked with. Officer Lanrick said, “We don’t have programs for bad kids; this is not ‘scared straight.’ This is for kids who realize what they are doing is not working and kids who will make a commitment to the program.” Donald M. added the insight that one child might run a spectrum from behaving very well to behaving very badly, with everything in between.

At the end of her tenure, I asked Brenda Z. to reflect on police participation in the Coalition. Her first reaction was to emphasize how important it was to have youth officers attend the meetings. In her estimation, “police feel very isolated and it was important to offer resources to them.” She found them very willing to participate and called them “one of the best partners in terms of producing what they need to produce and following through; they are very committed and reliable.” She also felt that some of the youth officers whom she had gotten to know well were “willing to expand their vision and the functions of their own roles.”

Eventually the youth officers’ attendance dwindled at meetings, and Brenda Z. agreed that they had “run into some problems” because, as one officer explained, “when push comes to shove, if they need cops on the street, youth officers are pulled and that is where we go.” This officer had told her (as he had also told me) that youth officers experience a lack of credibility in their own departments. Brenda Z. saw PRYSE as having helped to enhance youth officers’ credibility. She cited the influence of Laura Jane B., who was also on the PRYSE Steering Committee, as “someone on the inside” who supported youth officers. Participation in the youth programming that SS/HS

funded helped these officers to gain “respect and status,” Brenda Z. concluded. The officers themselves did not share this view, but were satisfied with the opportunity to slightly increase the time they worked with youth, as the SS/HS funds made possible. They also built relationships with professionals from organizations outside the criminal justice system, so like Oscar M. from the QDA, they became more aware of social services, and the professionals administering them, to whom they could direct youth and families when deemed appropriate or useful. Among the relationships built were those with a partner on the margin between criminal justice and social service: the mediation organization.

“The Community Mediation Organization”

Variously called “alternative dispute resolution,” “victim-offender mediation,” “conflict mediation or resolution,” or “community mediation,” from the 1970s forward a grassroots movement took shape to address interpersonal and community conflicts in an informal environment outside the criminal justice system. The aims were to divert vulnerable people from a life of offenses and institutionalizations in “the system,” improve the quality of American justice, and empower communities and individuals. In today’s world, community mediation has grown into a more state-involved, professional and formal set of practices and even the use of the term “movement” is avoided in some circles. While the community mediation sector is still motivated to reduce conflicts so as to avoid the full-blown involvement of the criminal justice system, its critics argue that

mediation has lost its original motivation of equity, and has instead become just another avenue by which the state “casts a wider net” and intervenes in people’s lives.¹⁰³

The non-profit community mediation organization (“CMO”) that played such a key role in PRYSE was incorporated in the early 1980s by Josh K., then a Law Guardian for Legal Aid Society’s Juvenile Rights Division. The founding director of CMO called himself a “recovering lawyer” and advocate for youth. He had many years of experience within the non-profit environment. In reflecting on the work of the Coalition, he noted that “the culture is competitive, and despite people’s common goals and objectives, the way the culture deems it to reach those goals is through competition” (Josh K., personal communication, September 24, 2004). During my last interview with Josh K., toward the end of the Coalition, I asked whether competition among the formal organizations in PRYSE posed specific challenges. His reply:

We need consensus on shaping a community... competition may be antithetical to shaping a community. We’re morphing into an integrated service system. This is difficult. The Health Center was in the most difficult position: they were damned if you do, damned if you don’t. It is very difficult to negotiate the line: to have respect for task, but not be greedy.

Josh K. sought to formulate a “holistic” vision of social services, “when you have all the people around the table,” but one with a “strength-based approach,” meaning one that identifies existing institutional strengths and avoids replicating them; instead “enhancing and expanding services,” thus also avoiding the utopian pursuit of a complete, ideal integration. His view was another version of modified social work. At one of the very last PRYSE meetings, he said that he thought PRYSE could continue

¹⁰³ For a general discussion on this history and the literature about community mediation and other diversion and “alternatives to incarceration” or ATI strategies, see Chapter 6, section on “Community Mediation and State Intervention.”

without funding if we accepted that “service delivery is driven by funding streams driven by narrow professional visions” and decided that we would become an entity “that could be a broker of those resources to present a more holistic approach.” He saw a place for the remnants of PRYSE in providing a “vehicle for enhancing and expanding services, not integrating” (Josh K., personal communication, September 24, 2004). It seemed that all of the strongest organizations were moving away from partnership, from integration, acknowledging that we had not become a coalition after all. PRYSE would not become a vehicle for anything, in the end, and Josh K. and his organization would be among the very first to leave as soon as Brenda Z. and the funding were gone.

Josh K. promoted the philosophy that community mediation is meant to empower people in a number of venues, and argued in a Web publication that private mediators can suffer from the persuasion of the free market. In an online forum for mediators, he wrote that sometimes mediators may find it easy to “substitute expediency and outcomes for the values of empowerment and an enhanced relationship” (Josh K., 2006).

In response to this article, another mediator commented that:

Only three types of mediators can survive (1) trust fund babies (2) public sector mediators, supported by public funds (3) free market mediators. [Josh K. 's] excellent article leads me to think he is in the second category, in essence an adjunct of the court system... In the public sector, while your customers may be satisfied, your client is the funding agency.

This guess was correct, and should inform our understanding of CMO’s position relative to the state. CMO started out with a family court “diversion program” for juveniles. According to their promotional materials, by 2005 they had grown to divert over 15,000 people from the Queens Court system annually. In each of New York City’s boroughs, a nonprofit agency works under contract with the New York City Administration

for Children's Services to provide diversion services where appropriate, and CMO, Inc. served as that agency for Queens County (Weingartner, et al., 2002). CMO also participated in the screening of petitions for "Persons in Need of Supervision," in New York commonly known as PINS petitions. A study of the PINS system by the Vera Institute of Justice, requested by New York City's Administration for Children's Services (Weingartner, et al., 2002) defined PINS in this way:

Under New York State law, a juvenile who is habitually truant, incorrigible, and generally beyond a parent's or guardian's control – or who is in unlawful possession of marijuana – can be declared a "person in need of supervision," or PINS. The policies and procedures operating locally to help these families are referred to as the PINS system (p. 1).

In other states, "persons in need of supervision" "are also referred to as 'status offenders' because the laws they break apply only to minors" (Souweine & Khashu, 2001, p. 1). By way of example, in New York City, a teen who leaves home without what the law considers "just cause" to stay at a friend's house, and refuses to return to a parent or guardian, can be issued a PINS petition by the court. Parents and guardians are the likeliest parties to initiate this process, and are often prompted to do so based on the advice of a police officer or school official (Weingartner, et al., 2002, p. 1). The Vera study found that children in Brooklyn and Queens were "more likely than those from the city's other boroughs to go directly to family court without first engaging community-based services" (Weingartner, et al., 2002, p. 3).

The system is administered jointly by the New York City Administration for Children's Services and the Department of Probation. Through their "Family Assessment Program" the agencies seek to (and claim to) reduce the number of PINS cases through

diversion to nonprofit social service providers, including mediation.¹⁰⁴ It is worth noting that the pressure, ubiquitous in the social services, to report high numbers of youth and families served might also lead to an over-estimation of actual numbers who have benefited from given services, including, in this case, mediation. Although CMO alone reports handling 15,000 diversions (presumably meaning attempts) per year, the Family Assessment Program reports having served only approximately 20,600 children over a three-year period (Family Assessment Program, n.d.).

CMO had once run an earlier mediation center in Rockaway, for about six years until about 1997. When the director of that site left, however, the relationships she had built went with her. And so CMO's participation in the Coalition was an attempt to re-institutionalize mediation on the peninsula, both in schools and across other service providers and governmental institutions.

In the first year of PRYSE funding, CMO received \$305,316 to implement four distinct programs; each consisted of multiple components, for a total of ten modules to implement. CMO stated a straightforward official goal for its involvement in the Coalition: "to provide a method for resolving interpersonal conflicts outside the court system" (PRYSE Community Profiles/ Program Descriptions, 2000, p. 13). This syncs with the organization's larger mission, explained to me by Tom H., the associate executive at CMO, in a 2001 interview: to influence a cultural turn towards resolving conflicts without physical violence, and with minimal need for an adversarial system of justice. PRYSE was an opportunity to reach children and adults in neighborhoods with above-average rates of interpersonal violence for the city.

¹⁰⁴ The population of juveniles that might enter the system increased after July 2002 when the law was changed to include youth up to 17 years old, whereas previously only those under 16 were eligible.

An important motivation to participate, and a strong component of CMO's proposed work, the organization intended to gain entry to more Rockaway public schools, persuading them to permit CMO staff to train youth to engage in peer mediation. It would also promote a broader goal: As Josh K. explained to me, they wanted to "sway the Board of Education to rethink its philosophy on discipline from a punitive and reactionary model to one that is proactive, fosters communication and is able to turn negative situations into teachable moments." This motivation would be difficult to achieve in all the schools targeted by PRYSE, not least because of the notoriously defensive ways of the city schools system.

Already in October 2000, as the real work of program implementation began, CMO staff ran into the same kind of difficulties and confusion in working with the school district that would become familiar to all of us. At first, it was not even certain how many and which schools were participating in the PRYSE projects, as the school district was very slow in providing the information. We were eventually able to determine the list with the help of Rick H., the first school district liaison.

The staff from CMO, in keeping with one of their main objectives, were committed to meeting with all the principals of schools in the project, as Josh K. had said, in order to "learn their philosophy and means of discipline within the schools." Staff would eventually meet with 12 of 15 "target school" principals and implement some form of mediation program in 11 of them. One principal decided his school had no problems that community mediation could address, much to the dismay of the mediation staff, who

viewed all of the participating schools in Rockaway as standing to benefit from exposure to the “teachable moment” philosophy.¹⁰⁵

Among their plans for PRYSE, CMO also hoped to see “enhanced relationships between [police] officers and youth” on the peninsula. They explained that in the past several years they had held what they called “focus groups” between youth and police and that these had been “very effective in improving relationships.” This part of their work was not funded through PRYSE, however.

To further the end of gaining influence in schools, the CMO executive director volunteered to chair the PRYSE Community and School Safety committee, where I was the Evaluation Team observer. As described in Chapter 3, his organization’s goals subtly yet consistently shaped the mission and vision of that committee, along with the tasks it pursued over several years. Josh K. was among those who prioritized “needs assessment” from the very first meeting of the Community School Safety Committee, a consistent concern for him as he had also mentioned that priority in a pre-PRYSE interview with his organization that I had conducted as a local evaluator. Later he was the lead advocate for the idea of a separate community survey by the committee, as described. CMO strongly shaped the vision and mission of the Coalition overall (certainly at the Steering Committee meetings) as well as the Community and School Safety committee, where their focus was much more on the schools than on the community at large.

¹⁰⁵ Having reviewed literature on education and “teachable moments,” they are considered something for teachers to use in curriculum development and practice, particularly among early childhood educators. A 1993 article in a Mennonite restorative justice newsletter is one of the few publications that mentions “teachable moments” in the context of discipline (Claassen, 1993).

My first Evaluation Team meeting with Josh K. and CMO associate executive Tom H. led to a discussion on how to set goals that could be assessed as programs progressed. Josh K. wanted to see if the work of the Coalition would lead to “a change in the awareness of resources... as well as a change in values/attitudes and a change in behavior.” As I asked questions to learn whether his organization already took steps to capture such information (and how), the director explained that these were not items the organization intended to measure directly, but that he would like to see measured, either by other organizations or by the Evaluation Team.

We did our best to live up to that, but were forced to rely on CMO’s own reporting and otherwise lacked means for assessing *impacts* of their work, as opposed to the raw number of interventions, or the number of youth and adults who were served. According to the final report on the PRYSE Coalition’s work, from June 2000 to May 2003 CMO worked with 4,337 people through 10 separate PRYSE-related programs. These included a mentoring program and a training institute to learn mediation skills that CMO made available to tenant associations, parent groups and Board of Education staff. It should be noted that we never verified or cross-checked the numbers served, nor for that matter any of the “population served” claims made by the other funded members of the PRYSE Coalition, as will be analyzed in the concluding chapter. The CMO program that reached the highest reported number of young people – the peer mediation program – was school-based and coordinated by a mediation staff member who had an office within two of the schools. That location facilitated access to higher numbers of young people over longer periods of time. The school-based personnel were already in the schools

prior to the Coalition’s inception, but the money from SS/HS permitted the organization to hire a CMO trainer to supervise those sites.

The ten programs were articulated by CMO as follows in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. CMO Programs with PRYSE

- Training Institute
- Case Management
- School-Based Programs
- Youth Violence Intervention-Prevention
- Mentoring
- Youth Development Initiatives
- Sister Circle
- Peer Mediation (Peace Crew)
- Youth Council
- Mediation (Center)

According to the data gathered by the Evaluation Team in consultation with CMO, their organization served the following number of people in the three years of funding:

3114 Children/Youth
632 families
591 staff

However, as will be explored in Chapter 8, the numbers do not necessarily reflect sustained or direct work with youth in particular over the years of the project. For example, there were about 13 young people who were regularly active with the CMO-developed Youth Council. But one year, CMO worked with the Youth Council to organize a one-day conference at one of the local high schools. The conference brought the participation of what the organization approximated to be 500 students that day, so for the reporting period, the population served worksheet included 513 youth served.

In summarizing for the June 2002 PRYSE report to the federal government, the CMO wrote that their programs served as “concrete examples of how [their] services have helped to empower residents to take ownership of, and make a positive change in,

their community” (PRYSE Report, January 1-June 30, 2002, p. 15). The organization included their work with the Police Athletic League (they were sharing an office in a local school), in which they recruited new participants to be trained as mediators. They stressed the peer mediation; training of local public school students to conduct mediation; and making professional mediators available to students, parents and staff.¹⁰⁶ The CMO training institute focused on qualifying adult mediators in the community; these participants would be certified mediators in New York. Many of the services offered by the mediation group included case management by staff social workers.

CMO would not have been able to enter as many schools as it did without the PRYSE project, so despite the school district’s minimal participation in the Coalition, this avenue was opened for them. After the end of PRYSE, in a last interview with Tom H., the associate executive director, he acknowledged the CSD 27 and Region 5 liaisons for making possible CMO’s entrée into the schools. He emphasized the importance of personnel capacity: “Everybody from the schools had the same drive and commitment to students, but it comes down to personal skill levels and immediate supervisor[s].” His organization also “welcomed the relationships with law enforcement,” because if they “establish a rapport [they gain] greater access to families that are working with those institutions” (2005).

Unfortunately, the end of PRYSE funding also spelled the end of CMO’s active work on the peninsula. They trained adult and youth residents to be mediators, through whom their work continued indirectly, but active staff was no longer available to work there. They also had to shut down the Rockaway pilot project of their Jamaica-based

¹⁰⁶ In one case, the school district requested that CMO staff mediators hold sessions between two assistant principals in the same school, who were having problems due to “differing communication styles” (ibid., p. 18).

youth violence reduction project.¹⁰⁷

I asked Tom H. if he thought that his organization or the Coalition partners had any impact on the viewpoint of the school administrations, given the goal to move towards a “teachable moment” philosophy. He thought that there “may have been a small shift.” He said that from his perspective, the clinical model dominated our early work on PRYSE, but that he and his organization do not share that approach because it “assumes a problem to be treated, versus looking at alternative perspectives.” With regard to evaluation and gathering numbers for the reports to “the feds,” he said:

Reporting is a game. We had rallies and assemblies at schools. That in itself looks good but the assembly itself did not have the same impact. We identified sixteen most at-risk students in the school, and worked very closely with them. Three of those students left the gang they were in. We had a great impact with them [but] not [with] the 240 who sat through a presentation.

Relationships created through PRYSE did give birth to the “Rockaway Men United” initiative (see Chapter 5), in which Tom H. was involved along with Oscar M., Andre L. and others, and this work has continued in the years since. This group in particular, inspired as it were from the best that a CCI has to offer – coalition building to improve neighborhood life – would accomplish goals it set for itself and gained access to African American, Caribbean black and Latino young men in the neighborhood out of sheer will and network connections built through PRYSE. As we will see in the first part of the next chapter, and as in many urban communities in the United States today, young men of color are victims of violence at each other’s hands, and grown men of color act to

¹⁰⁷ Years later CMO continued to advertise their ongoing program in Jamaica as available to youth throughout the borough of Queens.

intervene to attempt to change circumstances, even when those circumstances require broader structural change.

It feels good: whatever the word ‘community’ may mean, it is good ‘to have a community’, ‘to be in a community’... Company or society can be bad; but not the *community*... In short, ‘community’ stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess.

(Bauman, 2001, pp. 1-3)

CHAPTER 5 Chronicles of PRYSE and the Rockaways – 2001-2005

The Killing of Tommy Johnson

On January 10, 2001, 17-year-old Thomas Kareem Johnson, Jr., a young black man highly regarded in his community, was shot and killed by another young black man, Charles Sealey, a stranger to Johnson, at Beach 56th Street and Beach Channel Drive in Arverne. Johnson reportedly was trying to mediate on his cousin’s behalf a disagreement over a stolen cell phone and the disputed attentions of a girlfriend. The police said that Johnson was attempting to act as a peacemaker. Sealey, then 19, displayed an automatic handgun during their discussion, leading Johnson and his friends to literally walk away; although Johnson was already 100 feet from Sealey and his friends, Sealey began firing

and struck Johnson, mortally wounding him. Sealey turned himself in a few days later, his parents at his side, and in 2004 was sentenced to 25 years to life for the second-degree murder of Johnson.

In a neighborhood already overburdened with grief and fear regarding gun violence among young African American and black men, the death of Thomas Johnson was a catalyst for a series of community meetings on the peninsula, as it shocked and disturbed many community residents who saw the incident as flying in the face of messages encouraging young people to mediate disputes without resorting to violent behavior. Johnson was considered an excellent student, was a football player, and was well-liked at his Catholic high school in Queens, off the peninsula.

At a community-wide meeting called in response to the killing, the Queens District Attorney's office saw an opportunity to condemn young men using handguns to settle disputes. In this case, the victim's parents were praised for the good work they had done in raising their son. With regard to Sealey, however, QDA representatives held up the lack of opportunity in the community as the reason for generations of people living without hope and engaging in frequent violence without consideration of consequence or pain. Although Sealey was only 19 at the time, the officers of the 101st precinct said he was well-known to them.

This was the first of several crisis incidents that would prompt specific actions from PRYSE and affect its development. The Reverend Emma F. was quite visible during this time; the killing led her to hold "Town Hall" meetings, which culminated in a parent retreat partially funded and supported by the PRYSE Coalition. She was one of two powerful local women, albeit from very different interest groups on the peninsula, to

engage in public participation in PRYSE during its first year. I would only learn after their participation evaporated that both were running for City Council positions in 2001. Emma F., a former high school principal, was the African American pastor of a church in Arverne, while Helen J., a white woman from Belle Harbor, was program director at the Rockaway Artists Alliance. They were running for different seats, as the peninsula is divided among two City Council districts: the 31st on the east and the 32nd on the west. Neither candidate made it to the general election, based on the Democratic primary results from that year. Not long after they were defeated in those races, their participation in PRYSE dropped off precipitously.¹⁰⁸

During this year money originally assigned to a program of the local public hospital was reallocated for PRYSE Coalition activities (such as marketing and publications) as well as counseling services for children and adults. In addition some money was allocated for the development of a Youth Advisory Council. Despite efforts on the part of the PRYSE partner “Community Mediation Organization” (CMO), this council never came to pass as it was difficult to get youth to attend meetings consistently. The balance of the funds was devoted to tutoring and test preparation for standardized tests, and a small amount was contributed to the aforementioned parent retreat, held at York College in June 2001.

In May 2001, the Coalition spent new funds that it had received for a youth violence intervention project via the city’s Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) programs, which are federally financed. NDAs are low-income neighborhoods

¹⁰⁸ As of January 2001, Helen J. was chair of the Educational and School Initiatives; she was still participating in early 2002, but departed soon thereafter. Rev. Emma F. participated in the parent retreat she helped initiate in 2001, but did not participate much in PRYSE beyond the summer of that year.

designated for federal Community Service Block Grants by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD). According to the DYCD:

The NDA Initiative, through the Neighborhood Advisory Boards (NABs), fosters community-level engagement to ensure that residents have opportunities to contribute to change in their neighborhoods and that services address the most pressing needs of each community (New York City DYCD, 2010, para. 2).

All of the eastern and much of the central Rockaway peninsula at the time comprised NDA Queens 14, up to Beach 116th Street (New York City DYCD, “Queens NDA 14,” n.d.). The Family Health Clinic and the Coalition had been awarded almost \$20,000 in NDA funds to spend on projects related to youth violence: one for a presentation by a leader in gang alternative trainings, himself a former gang member; and another for the bulk of financial support of the parent-student retreat requested by community residents after the murder of Tommy Johnson.

The service providers involved with PRYSE at the time were certain that gang-related violence was on the rise at Far Rockaway High School. Although no source was named, Brenda Z. emphasized in a letter to the DYCD Deputy Commissioner in application for these funds that “rumors indicate that there will be a ‘blood bath’ this summer.” Thankfully the blood bath never happened, but the money was awarded.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ This is not to minimize the reality and impact of violence, especially gun violence, particularly involving young people as perpetrators and victims in Far Rockaway. Recall the Lexis-Nexis search mentioned in Chapter 2, which revealed that of 1142 documents containing the phrase “Far Rockaway” between June 1, 2000 (when PRYSE officially started work) and December 31, 2004 (when it technically ended), 224 also contained the words “violence OR murder OR homicide OR kill.” Incidentally, the first Lexis-Nexis result in that search chronologically is a New York *Daily News* article announcing the PRYSE grant. The area continues to struggle with gun violence. As recently as May 2008, Far Rockaway made headlines in city papers for a weekend that saw five people wounded and two teenagers killed, all from gun violence.

“Not Everyone Is a Crackhead” – Social Marketing

Early in 2001, the Coalition began turning its attention to “social marketing” via a new Marketing and Communications committee formed for the purpose of promoting PRYSE, really all in the service of sustainability. This began when Brenda Z. requested technical assistance from the SS/HS communications team to assist in creating a “communications plan.”¹¹⁰ They (Jane H., a marketing specialist by training and Cynthia C., a counseling psychologist by training) came to a Steering Committee meeting in February to assist the Coalition in forging consensus over how best to market PRYSE. Because of the challenges involved in achieving agreement on where to focus energies in marketing (as in other actions), the SS/HS consultant recommended that the group needed a new subcommittee to really develop a marketing plan. This session and all subsequent technical assistance regarding communications focused on “social marketing,” a term coming into widespread use at the time. The Communications team used this definition: “Social marketing uses the same principles as companies do to market a product *and* to market a behavior change” (PRYSE Post-specialty workshop activity report, 2001, p. 2).

During the first communications session, Brenda Z. offered three proposals for platforms on which to focus our marketing efforts, inviting attendees to comment on the ideas of (1) a parent recruitment campaign; (2) a community resource center; and (3) a community-wide violence prevention program. The feedback highlighted three main areas of concern: First, that parent involvement is very difficult; there are too many

¹¹⁰ In the second year of PRYSE the Coalition began to avail itself of technical assistance recommended and provided by SS/HS. Technical assistance is widely understood as one of a number of approaches to community development (Robinson & Green, 2011). There are many links between professionals, academics and the government which converge in the realm of technical assistance.

barriers to participation. This is a recurring – if somewhat problematic – theme of social work in many low-income urban neighborhoods, and was oft-invoked in Rockaway in particular. Second, both teacher retention and parent involvement were needed to create “behavior change.” Finally, it was suggested that the neighborhood itself needed a public relations campaign to highlight its positive aspects. As one participant put it, people needed to be reminded that “not everyone is a crackhead or a thug.”

Given the challenges of achieving consensus on social marketing plans, as well as the heavy amount of work involved in crafting and implementation, the Coalition therefore formed the standing Marketing and Communications committee, which completed most of its work by June 2002 (this was chaired by Wayne G., the school district liaison, who worked closely with Tim M., a “community relations consultant” whom we will learn more about below). Unfortunately, this committee’s work didn’t peak until well into the second year of a technically three-year project, which meant that some Coalition participants believed it was too little, too late. Our community survey revealed that awareness of the PRYSE project from 2001 to 2003 showed a (statistically significant) increase, from 11.5 percent to 15.8 percent of residents reporting any knowledge of the initiative; but some found this figure disappointing.

Call the Consultants!

By March 2001, Brenda Z. and Cathy C. were concerned that the Steering Committee work be as “productive and efficient” as possible. New stakeholders were constantly appearing around the table by this time, especially as people were not initially aware that funding opportunities were unlikely to arise from participating. The new

members would be brought up to speed, but by then everyone who had been attending meetings regularly was already frustrated and fatigued by the process; some Steering Committee meetings lasted three or more hours. Additionally, Rev. Cassius C., the representative from the Ministers Coalition, was taking every opportunity to turn our attention to what he called “the people in the basements,” by which he meant those whose voices were not represented at this or any other policy-related table, those who were marginal in society but about whom he expected our work should revolve. In principle, most of us agreed with him. However, his delivery inspired great emotion, as he adopted a style that was long-winded and scolding. Initially his speeches inspired frustration but eventually enough trust grew among participants that he was teased, and was known to laugh himself, about his “ministerial” approach. In part the frustration towards Cassius C. was due to his consistent and resentful reminders that his organization had received the smallest share of funds. In their first year report on funded work, the Ministers Coalition would note that their own group was “disappointed that it has so few funds to deliver their mental health services” and further that those funds “were not received before May of 2001” (PRYSE Progress Report: January 1-June 30, 2001, p. 17). The balance of emotional tensions arose because Cassius C. had a commanding presence and took what sometimes felt like an excruciatingly long time to make a point. Brenda Z. and Cathy C. thought he was “disruptive,” and his role at the table was one of their motivations for contacting the federal consultant brokers, May Lum and Nicole Bossard.

But more than just being concerned about getting off topic and generating what Brenda Z. called “unhealthy conflict,” she and Cathy C., as the project manager and coordinator, were feeling besieged with blame. As they explained in a memo to Lum and

Bossard, requesting technical assistance: “The PRYSE management staff ([Brenda and Cathy]) are blamed when things don’t go smoothly.” They were also concerned about the perception that many committee members had that both of them, but mostly Brenda Z., were more powerful than they themselves believed themselves to be, and that they were less than democratic in their management style:

There has been an expectation that PRYSE management ([Brenda and Cathy]) will/can do it all. There is a sense that we are all powerful and controlling. This is although our style has been democratic, collaborative and supportive. (At least that’s how we see it). How can we maintain our management role and leadership while encouraging shared responsibility and ownership of the process?

This request led the federal consultant/brokers to suggest having more shared governance, at least on the surface, by rotating the chair of the Steering Committee from month to month. In addition, the consultants summed up the concerns of “PRYSE management” as follows:

They ([Brenda and Cathy]) are: (1) dealing with disruptive members, (2) how to inform and engage the community AND have effective and efficient working meeting, (3) logistics for communications with and among working groups, and (4) involving other committee members in facilitation and management of meetings.

The consultant/brokers suggested to Brenda Z. and Cathy C. a technique called the “parking lot,” whereby ideas that came up during meetings that were “off topic” would be written down on a large paper hung on the wall within everyone’s sight. This area – the “parking lot” – would be examined at the end of the meeting to see if any of the ideas should be pursued. This technique was never implemented, however. We tried it once and became overwhelmed by the size of our parking lot, and never tried it again. The brokers also suggested having some kind of orientation meeting for new interested

stakeholders, thereby making sure that only people who had been through an orientation would be able to attend “working meetings.” This suggestion also was never implemented, not even to experiment with it. In the end, the conference call resulted in a new consultant being scheduled to work with the Steering Committee in June to “train everyone on the fundamentals of meeting facilitation, strategic planning, and tools for managing committee productivity.” The ideas proposed by the consultants may have been useful, but without implementation the only actual impact was yet one more instance of federal dollars for improving school safety being channeled into the hands of consultants who in this case were not even from New York.

At this point Brenda Z. was worried not so much about the entire Coalition but instead with the Steering Committee; the problem was that it was difficult at times to distinguish between these entities. It had become clear by this point that the role of the Steering Committee was unspecified to the point of confusion and frustration. So another outside expert, the “leadership consultant” Eric H., was invited to our June 2001 meeting to “provide training and consultation regarding purpose, roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the Steering Committee and its membership.”

Eric H. began our session by introducing his own definition of empowerment. He said there were “four ingredients of empowerment” and called them “ARIA,” which stood for Authority, Resources, Information and Accountability. He added that the fifth ingredient was discipline. This philosophy, or rather ideology, was born out of decades of business management theories emphasizing the improvement of teamwork (although he didn’t tell us this himself). The definition in fact is from Kimball Fisher’s 1993 book on “leading self-directed work teams,” which aimed to improve the ease with which

managers manage and their subordinates work. Some sources call it the “bible” of teamwork; and an exemplar of the philosophy by which, in the 1980s and 1990s, corporate culture took a turn from the manager as “boss” to the manager as an inspiration “leader” (as cited in Ciulla, 2004).

During our workshop, Eric H. drew exactly that distinction, between “leadership” and “management.” He explained that leaders are guided by “vision, values, mission and issues,” whereas managers focus on “how to do” what needs doing. What was most telling was his insistence (following management theory) that “decision making is a **management function**” (emphasis his), not a leadership function. He explained that managers can delegate authority and “variably empower members,” but that management has the ultimate responsibility for what happens and what does not. The workshop brought to mind C. Wright Mills’ 1956 summation that “the moral problem of social control in America today is less the explicit domination of men than their manipulation into self-coordinated and altogether cheerful subordinates” (p. 26).

In the end the workshop by Eric H. led to the creation of a “steering committee workgroup” that met twice (and in which I participated). Our job was to produce a set of recommendations for introduction at a later meeting of the Steering Committee. During that workgroup we acknowledged the imbalance of resources between funded and volunteer participants. We agreed that in the future, each Steering Committee meeting would be co-chaired by two people, one each from a funded partner and a non-funded partner, but that the responsibility for photocopies, minutes and the like would always rest with the funded partner.

In retrospect, it was unfortunate that Cassius C. did not participate in this process, as it would have been interesting and challenging to have his perspective as we tried to figure out what role the Steering Committee would play, what responsibilities the manager, Brenda Z., should have, and what role funded programs should play within the Coalition.

June 2001 – The First Annual Report

The Coalition had to submit an “end of first year” report to SS/HS on June 30, 2001 detailing the progress of the funded and unfunded work of PRYSE. It came on the heels of Brenda Z. having prepared comments for the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime in May, 2001. Unfortunately, these comments would never become part of the official record of the day’s testimony for reasons I never learned; although the prepared comments would be entered into the June 2001 progress report to the federal program officer. Regardless, Brenda Z. took the opportunity to announce that “the community is feeling empowered” and to highlight the Community Resource Center that had been developed by the Family Health Clinic, which she characterized as “the hub of PRYSE activity.” She highlighted that residents were being pulled into the “comprehensive and integrated approach to reducing violence,” including being hired and trained as service-providers “to their neighbors, friends and relatives,” permitting the health center to “strengthen and empower the entire community” (PRYSE Progress Report: January 1-June 30, 2001, p. 2). Here we see that in translation, the assumption of empowerment is intended to engender continued political and public funding support.

The Executive Summary of the annual report, written by Brenda Z., included four points as the initiative's main accomplishments for the year:

- Established a community-wide coalition of funded projects, local service providers, school personnel, law enforcement, youth, community residents, public agencies and officials, and other Rockaway community stakeholders.
- Established four working committees and several sub-committees to address the goals and objectives of PRYSE.
- Developed an active steering committee comprised of committee chair-people, funded projects, and other key community stakeholders.
- Provided school and community-based services through funded projects targeting the six elements of the grant.

Only years later would we realize that from the federal government's perspective, the last point about direct service was the one that should have been expanded or emphasized.

Very early on, even at the first public meetings, it had become clear that the terms of the SS/HS grant did not allow for budget flexibility after funds had been dispensed among the partners in the proposal. Several important budget omissions were realized within the first few months of the Coalition's work. Perhaps most significant was that no money had been budgeted for PRYSE's own organizational infrastructure, such as the committees. The efforts of the committees, including even the heart of the Coalition, the Steering Committee, in reaching out to neighborhood residents and schools to "map their needs" would be an exercise in futility – and even prompt alienation among the residents – because any newly uncovered needs, not having been placed in the original budget, would go unattended.

This gap also bred problems because the coalition was expected to include community residents in all of its efforts – Brenda Z. was open in noting difficulties "to

attract community attention and encourage community involvement” (PRYSE Progress Report: January 1-June 30, 2001, p. iii). As the committees were comprised of volunteers as well as funded partners, it was very hard to sustain equitably the level of work expected. I was being paid to attend all meetings and conduct committee work, but community residents were not. I had resources to send out letters and make phone calls, but community residents did not.

Locations for meetings were also a problem, because of limited options at the Family Health Clinic and the general lack of convenient and spacious meeting rooms on the peninsula. Over time we met in a variety of spaces, until the Clinic purchased a new space close to the heart of Far Rockaway for its Community Resource Center (CRC). In the transitional period, the CRC was housed in a temporary space a few blocks from the ultimate location, which today still houses the CRC and other Clinic services. The SS/HS funds provided for a center that would be sustainable in the long term, but this center was then and remains under the aegis of the clinic. PRYSE funds made possible the hiring of some of the staff, and they were then indeed residents of the neighborhoods around the center, but only the already relatively well-resourced FHC could have sustained such a center. The center was called the PRYSE CRC until the funding ended and it was changed to the FHC CRC. Perhaps the addition of services is the most important concern of residents and staff; however, it would be a flexible view to chalk up the CRC as a PRYSE success, rather than one of the FHC.

That first year report made no bones about the faulty connection to the school district: “Although many services are being provided in the schools, there has been little involvement from the central office of CSD 27” (p. 4). The new liaison from CSD 27

was hired in July – Wayne G. – and after he arrived in September, his work significantly improved communication between PRYSE and the schools.

During this time the Evaluation Team began to work on the website for the Coalition, which we published at the end of 2002 at the now-defunct URL, www.pryse.org. The site explained the project, gave information about the “warm line” that had been established at the FHC and links to all the partner organizations that had a website. The site was eventually integrated and maintained by a small technology firm that was hired by the FHC to assist them with development of the Healthy Communities Access Project grant they had been awarded. (That grant for another CCI would prompt the creation of a new coalition: The Rockaway Health Alliance, covered below.)

The Evaluation Team also secured permission during this time to hold focus groups with young people to better understand their concerns about health and safety on the peninsula. Up until that point, no young people had attended a Steering Committee meeting; the only contact youth were having with funded agencies was in the form of direct service. Our goal was to better integrate a youth perspective into the work of the Coalition by at least capturing the voices of Rockaway teens.¹¹¹

The other major work undertaken by the evaluators during this time was the aforementioned telephone survey of community residents. It was expensive and would eventually raise points of contention between the school district representative and the evaluators, as well as the project manager and evaluators. We interviewed 903 randomly-selected households on subjects ranging from residents’ opinions on the health and safety issues of greatest concern to them to their awareness of the programs

¹¹¹ After difficulties involving an attempt to survey youth in schools, youth focus groups were implemented in 2002 and the results are presented in Chapter 7.

sponsored by PRYSE. We included more detailed questions for an over-sampling of households with children regarding their perspectives on schools, recreation and access to neighborhood resources and services.¹¹²

Fall 2001 – A Season of Traumas

Many things changed in New York City and around the world after the events of September 11, 2001 in Manhattan, Washington and Pennsylvania. The World Trade Center had been visible from most places on the peninsula. Many of the people of the Rockaways had their fear and grief compounded exactly two months and a day later, when a passenger plane crashed into the Belle Harbor neighborhood on the western end of the peninsula. The November 12, 2001 crash killed all 260 people on board American Airlines Flight 587, en route from JFK to the Dominican Republic, as well as five people on the ground – Belle Harbor residents in their homes at the time – in what people initially feared was another terror attack, so soon after the Twin Towers fell. In 2005, a memorial for those killed in the Flight 587 crash was held on the peninsula at Tribute Park (in a neighborhood near Belle Harbor), which had been constructed as a September 11th memorial. According to Mayor Bloomberg, who led the park opening ceremony that day, 75 Rockaway residents had lost their lives on September 11th. Sources differ in assigning the nearly 3,000 deaths from the attacks in New York by residence, but the fact remains that the Western end of the Rockaways was then and remains today home to a large community of mostly white firefighters and police officers, and its neighborhoods

¹¹² This is still the only major survey of the peninsula to be completed to date, and was repeated each year for three years. The 2003 data reflected some interesting changes, as well as interesting unchanging patterns over time. Here data from the survey appears in Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7.

suffered disproportionately high losses among the 409 first responders killed in Lower Manhattan on September 11th – among whom were 343 New York City firefighters, 23 NYPD officers, 37 officers with the Port Authority police force, and six Emergency Medical Services staff.

In the six-month report to “the feds” – as we came to call the Federal Program Officer who received our updates – for the period from July to year-end 2001, the program manager emphasized the “dual traumas” faced by Rockaway residents during this time. As a result, for the first time in the Coalition’s work its energies were focused on the Western end of the peninsula.¹¹³ The Family Health Clinic engaged in (and later highlighted their) work providing grief and bereavement services following the tragedies. In the PRYSE report to the feds, the Clinic’s efforts were translated into efforts of the PRYSE Coalition – a move that would occur repeatedly over the years with the Clinic as the organization receiving the lion’s share of resources, and with Brenda Z. in a position to describe her other work there as the work of PRYSE. The report on the Coalition’s work also obscured the differences between the peninsula’s east and west ends: reports to “the feds” for the next two periods continued to emphasize the trauma suffered and the counseling services administered to Rockaway residents after 9/11 and Flight 587.

¹¹³ See Chapter 2. I follow Hildebrandt (2005) in regarding the Western end neighborhoods of Rockaway Park, Belle Harbor, Neponsit and Breezy Point as similar in their “ethnic, religious and socioeconomic profiles” (p. 109). The 2000 census put the population of Belle Harbor at about 88% white; Breezy Point was about 98% white. Beverage (2001) wrote that “the area with the largest percentage of white people in all of New York City is in Queens -- Breezy Point in the Rockaways, with 98 percent” (para. 8). Belle Harbor and Breezy Point are solidly middle class (as Hildebrandt reports on 2000 census data, they had “average household incomes of \$48,604 and \$58,491, respectively,” p. 111).

Early 2002 – Sustainability Concerns

From the outset the federal government made it abundantly clear that PRYSE needed to think about sustainability, as further federal funds were unlikely to flow, and although the Coalition did win a few additional grants over the years of its work, it found neither the motivation nor above all the funding needed for true sustainability. This was emphasized as a concern already in the first annual report of June 2001. The theory that the initial SS/HS grant could somehow be “leveraged” by way of good performance and evaluations into attracting other public and private funds in sufficient amounts to sustain the Coalition at a constant level of non-profit social service provision was, at best, well-intentioned but woefully over-imaginative; at worst, an abandonment of responsibility by a federal government looking to control and demobilize the poor and string along the hopes of the potentially unruly and rebellious young with a series of relatively low-cost sops. The Coalition always remained dependent on its charismatic leader, and PRYSE would effectively die when Brenda Z. left the Family Health Clinic in late 2004.

But the early part of 2002 was still well within the funded period, and so work on the committees proceeded as planned from the previous year, funded partners continued implementing their programs, and the Evaluation Team extended its work to include its survey of the peninsula and crafting the Coalition web page. In January 2002, PRYSE held one of three Steering Committee meetings that were intended as “reports to the community.” It was also meant to honor Claire Shulman as she stepped down from her sixteen years of service as the first female Borough President of Queens, having been succeeded by the still incumbent Helen Marshall. Shulman had been supportive of

PRYSE and so it made sense that her political contribution would be marked by Rockaway interests.

At the February 2002 meeting, concerns were raised again about how to think about sustainability given the inherently competitive process by which the groups around the table were typically funded (Brenda Z. called it the “survival mentality”). Cassius C. in particular expressed concern that only certain agencies were in a position to be the “lead” and that a funded agency takes on “full responsibility for spending the money and may exclude some coalition members” (PRYSE Steering Committee minutes, February 22, 2002, p. 1). We never did reach a resolution of the issue, but we did discuss whether a group of representatives from the Coalition wanted to form their own non-profit. We would revisit that idea again in 2004, but it would not come to pass.

The Self-Steering Focus Group (Marketing Redux)

By early 2002, the Coalition still had not progressed as far as intended with disseminating information about PRYSE and its programs. To that end, in February, a new consultant was hired to develop a “marketing communications plan.” I assisted him as his note-taker in March 2002, when he facilitated a focus group of eight adult Rockaway residents living near one of the local middle schools. He aimed to gather information about their preferences for a “PRYSE public relations campaign,” which was to include everything from the colors and logos, whether a song should be associated with the project to enhance its brand identity, and what venues were best for reaching the most people with information about the programs. The moderator started by asking where most people get their information about what is happening in Far Rockaway

(which I saw as a misguided question and an argument against using outside consultants, because the group was being held not in Far Rockaway, which ends on Beach 32nd Street, but on Beach 104th Street). People tossed around a few places and media. Most of the participants lived in public housing developments and reported that word of mouth was really the best way for information to reach them, primarily via people in the management office of the buildings in which they live. They also advocated the use of flyers in community centers, although one of the women in the group was disheartened that her local center had recently closed.

As a result of this woman's lament at the loss of the community center, the conversation turned to the need for places for youth to see adults who act as role models. This shift happened without the moderator's prompting and a bit to his dismay, as he kept struggling to get people back to the original question of where they get information. A few women began talking about adults serving as role models in the community, which led to a discussion about the police, and how they are actually strangers in the community. One woman said:

The police don't take the time to know the adults in this community who know the kids in this community. The police do not know people. They will label you before they know you. You could be the best person in the community but they will stereotype you based on how you look to them. The kids then come out with hatred and distrust of police regardless of what the parents do. This is an example of the community [meaning the police] not holding up what the parents instill.

The attendees were in agreement that police, because they do not know the young people in the area, rely on stereotypes and this leads to resentment but also possibly to more serious problems. One of the men in the group, who worked for PRYSE, said he agreed with the assessment of police stereotyping and then told the moderator to pay

attention to “the untold story of Rockaway... that each development is its own town.”

This took the conversation in a different direction as another participant voiced the local concern that

one thing we all notice with programs like PRYSE or other government programs is that the money will stop at a certain street and won't move up any further. Government money doesn't come up to the 80s.

She was referring to the street numbers in the neighborhood known as Hammels; this was a resentment I found on the peninsula quite regularly: people who lived outside Far Rockaway, as neglected as it was generally agreed to be, felt their area was even more neglected by comparison. Struggling to get the conversation back on track, the moderator reiterated his interest in how people learn about community events and services. Some mentioned the local paper and radio station but most continued to agree that flyers and word of mouth were more likely to get the word out – people were concerned that the service providers on the peninsula didn't understand that so many people in their neighborhoods were illiterate. Another woman, also from the middle of the peninsula, said she was interested enough by PRYSE to attend a meeting, but her interest was disappointed:

I signed up at the first meeting at my management center [of her public housing development]; my daughters signed up, too. PRYSE never called us. We wanted to be involved. This sort of thing happens a lot, especially at this end of the peninsula.¹¹⁴

This woman obviously knew about PRYSE by word of mouth, and was privy to the conversation that had begun when we held the very first public meeting to announce PRYSE: “*As I understand it, the money for PRYSE was spent before the community could*

¹¹⁴ I took this woman's contact information at the end of the focus group and asked that someone from the CRC contact her and her family and to be sure to put them on the Coalition mailing list.

say anything about it. We need something for kids on the peninsula.” The others agreed. Although PRYSE money was being spent on programs for young people, in the eyes of this group of residents the money wasn’t actually providing something for kids.

The moderator now reflected that he was hearing the group say that people *did know* about PRYSE, but were not necessarily taking advantage of it. He asked, “Why do you think they are not taking advantage of the services?” The same woman who had expressed the view that the money was spent before the community had any input comment offered this answer:

*...because it is the same old thing. The PRYSE services are minimal. And it is the **same old thing** (emphasis hers). I can go to Jamaica to do the things that the PRYSE office is offering us. The kids here are not living, they are existing, and this is what people need to have addressed. The kids are making babies – there is nothing else to do. We have no Gibbs here...¹¹⁵*

Another woman interrupted her to point out that the Western end of the peninsula had a hockey rink, but nothing like that was available in other neighborhoods. As would be mentioned in the focus groups I held with young people later in this year, the adults in this group also saw a very serious need for mentoring of youth and emphasized the need for more Big Brothers/Big Sisters programs as well as leadership development for young people. Before we finally arrived at the planned discussion of possible songs and tag-lines to use for PRYSE, another conversation began about the difference between the middle and Eastern end of the peninsula, as juxtaposed against the Western end. This was, by now, a common theme, as in almost every public meeting the issue of a

¹¹⁵ Here the speaker refers to Katherine Gibbs School, a private for-profit technical school which once enjoyed a reputation for strong secretarial training and which, as of 2009, is closing. The poor reputation of the school preceded it already in the 1990s, but no one in the focus group mentioned this.

Rockaway divided arose. The crux of discussion was about recreational opportunities, as would also be the case in the youth focus group (see Chapter 7).

Eventually the group reviewed possible songs to be used as the Coalition's theme music (unfortunately, we would never have reason to use any musical selection), as well as graphics for the letterhead, brochures and the website. Although the participants liked the song "Ain't No Stopping Us Now," this 1979 hit was seen as too outdated to be an effective campaign song today. They decided that PRYSE could use the song, but the tagline that should accompany the song would be: "Ain't no stopping us now, Rockaway's on the rise." We also asked their opinion on a logo, and with their recommendations, the following was selected:



Figure 5.1. PRYSE Logo, as Tested by the Focus Group of February 2002.

Finally, the group was shown an image that had been crafted by another outside consultant (a colleague of one of the evaluation team members) to appear on the website. The artist had attempted to create a "multicultural-looking" group of people, who lacked facial features, but nonetheless appeared animated. The members of the focus group were not hesitant in expressing their rejection of the image as presented. One woman remarked that rather than achieving the effect of capturing a brown and black group of people,

which she assumed was the point, that everyone in the image instead looked green. The entire group agreed and laughed about this for some time, wondering aloud if we were trying to “attract aliens from outer space,” again to the dismay of the focus group moderator. My report on the focus group, later delivered to the PRYSE Steering Committee, indicated that “they wanted a much more multicultural looking group and no green people.” Figure 5.2 shows the logo after the “de-greening” process was complete:

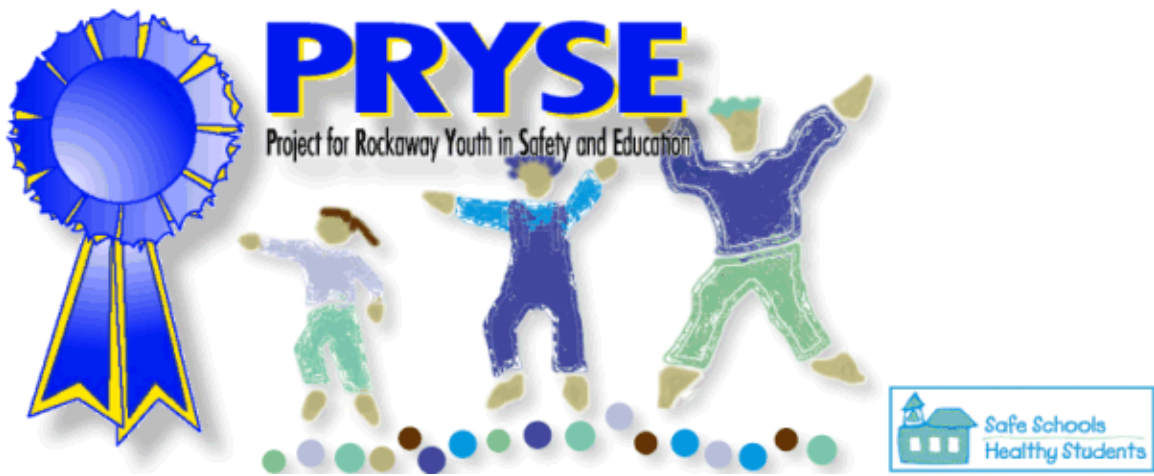


Figure 5.2. PRYSE “Green People” Graphic, February 2002.

In the end, we incorporated as much of the feedback from the focus group as possible. However, they were clear that printed materials, as well as web materials, were really going to be lost on people like them, as well as the people that we said we wanted to reach. As the man who worked with PRYSE said, “The problem in this community is literacy. PRYSE is not keeping it simple and you need to keep it simple; people need to be able to read the flyers you post.”

A Verdict from the Community Development Committee

The PRYSE Community Development committee, in 2002, planned and implemented a multicultural festival, which was originally funded through PRYSE but eventually got co-sponsorship from Weed & Seed. Although the meaning of the term “community development” varies widely among government, nonprofit and political groups, in this case, the committee defined it as developing community involvement, including working to develop a youth council, creating a community resource directory, and holding the festival with youth performers, free food and some rides, as well as tables of information from service providers.

In April 2002, the co-chairs of the Community Development Committee were interviewed to gain perspective on how they saw the work of their committee, and the Coalition, progressing. They had several suggestions and observations. One of the co-chairs, Jack P., was a long-time resident of the peninsula, an activist in the African American community, a community board member, and a Human Rights Specialist at the New York City Commission on Human Rights (a mayoral agency), and his perspective was particularly relevant to gaining insight about how the people for whom the grant was truly intended saw it playing out. Jack P. began with the concern that there was “too little genuine community involvement in PRYSE.” He pointed out that “simple things could be done, like holding coalition meetings in the evening, after school and work hours, so that families can attend.” Although that suggestion would be made repeatedly during the five years of the project, only one evening meeting was ever held (in May 2002), and it was at a location on 116th Street, five miles away from the heart of Far Rockaway. That meeting also turned into not much more than an opportunity for politicians and

supervisors to offer praise to PRYSE, although a number of residents also spoke with sincerity about how members of PRYSE had helped them during periods of hardship. In short, it was not the kind of meeting that Jack P. was suggesting, although it was taped for broadcast on Queens Public TV as a way to reach more people about the Coalition's work (also thanks to Jack).

Jack P. furthermore argued that the PRYSE committees' work would be made much more effective with modest staff and financial support. He suggested that hiring young people who were working with the local development corporation would be a great way to address this at relatively low cost. But once again, there were no funds for this in the original budget, no way to change the budget, and no other funds secured for it during the term of the Coalition's work. Finally, Jack P. said that in the view of his committee, it didn't seem that "PRYSE management truly (felt) accountable to the Steering Committee." He saw decisions happening without knowing how they were made, and said that this bred resentments and suspicions.

“Studied to Death” – In Search of Youth

So much of our experience with PRYSE highlighted a gap in our evaluation, as in the initiative's approach as a whole: the voices of the very youth that PRYSE funds were intended to assist were glaringly absent from our data; just as they tended to be absent from any of the groups making decisions on their behalf. In the hope of correcting our end of this, but also at the request of the federal government, in early 2002 the PRYSE Evaluation Team was granted approval from the Board of Education to conduct quantitative surveys of youth at the two high schools participating in the project. Our

goal was to achieve a representative sample from grades 9 through 12. However, the approval process required that the principals also consent to allow us into their schools. They both declined. One principal left the decision up to the school's parent council, and so I visited a meeting of the parents; but I was unable to persuade them. The general sense shared by the principals and the parents alike was that their children were generally "studied to death," but without any tangible reward or benefit. Although no one came out and said it, I was certain that the subtexts of our discussion were ethnoracial and class concerns.

I also believe that behind the scenes, two additional issues were operating that matter greatly for the story of community change and of partnerships between schools and communities. Principals by then were resentful of PRYSE, having long before realized that they were asked to participate without receiving meaningful financial resources in their own hands.¹¹⁶ Second, principals act to protect their schools' reputations at all costs, and for good reason: their jobs depend on their ability to maintain positive assessments not only of their own work, but also the work of their teachers, staff and students. We have mentioned examples of this (sometimes justifiably) defensive mindset in the schools system; another will be detailed below, in the story of a meeting in which the evaluators shared findings from our three years of phone surveys, and the schools representative interpreted our questions about school safety as an attack on the schools.

¹¹⁶ While many PRYSE programs were funded for school-related work, the funding went through the partner non-profits and agencies – except for the aforementioned safety equipment, safety agents and school aides, which however had also been set as priorities in the original PRYSE proposal without prior consultation with the principals.

Having failed in the attempt to secure permission to interview high school students via the principals, I sought avenues for more direct connection with local youth. During this year, I volunteered once a week for three months in the spring with the local branch of the public library during after-school hours. I had heard about it often from the Steering Committee meetings: many children and teenagers spent time after school at the library, which at the time occasioned conflict due to noise, arguments and some (rare) violent confrontations. I saw that the adults in the library (and in the schools) had a perception that young people banked on awareness that “security can’t touch them” and would push the envelope as far as it could go. The librarians also felt they needed what they called “riot control” during the period from 2:30 to 5 pm, when most youth entered the library. The security guard from the library in which I volunteered would go on his break at 3 pm, precisely the wrong time for his absence, but the librarian was not his supervisor and could not interfere with his schedule. Most youth came to use computers during that time. In addition to the library volunteering, I made efforts to meet youth involved in the PRYSE programs, and succeeded in participating with some of the QDA and NYPD youth programs on a few occasions (as in the case of my “arrest” by Youth Explorers in the previous chapter).¹¹⁷

Late in 2001, I had begun communicating regularly with a drama therapist from one of the high schools on the peninsula; his position was funded by the Family Health Clinic. He had offered to assist me in organizing and moderating a series of focus groups with young people about life in Rockaway. Our planning stepped up after the Evaluation Team’s failure to gain permission for in-school survey research. I learned that the likelihood of completing any research could be increased dramatically by using

¹¹⁷ I return to the library volunteering in Chapter 6.

community channels and securing the permission of young people and their parents directly, rather than through the schools. And so, finally, I was able to organize and co-conduct three separate focus groups, in April and May 2002, with a total of 41 young participants (13 females, 28 males) ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. They were recruited via contacts with service providers who knew high-school-aged youth at one of the area schools.¹¹⁸ Chapter 7 of this dissertation proceeds from that research.

Starting 2002 – HCAP and the Rockaway Health Alliance

PRYSE had held a community-wide meeting in March 2002, announced in the local paper, to solicit participation in a grant application for the federally-funded Community Access Program (CAP) sponsored by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). CAP aimed to support communities in improving access to health care for uninsured and under-insured Americans through integration and coordination of services. The CAP initiative was first announced in the February 2000 Federal Register, under the Clinton administration, and was eventually declared “ineffective” and eliminated from the budget in 2003, one of 26 programs so declared by the US Office of Management and Budget via its Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). Other independent assessments of HCAP (as CAP came to be known) came to similar findings: “despite solid community leadership and carefully crafted plans, political, economic, and organizational obstacles precluded much expansion of coverage and constrained reforms” (Brown and Stevens, 2006, p. w150).

¹¹⁸ At the time, NYC Department of Education rules permitted recruitment of students through existing programs without obtaining principals’ permission. However, to avoid any conflicts of interest, I recruited students outside of school time with the assistance of PRYSE participants.

As in the SS/HS model, CAP required the participation of specified local authorities in coalitions, and also encouraged private/public partnerships, making “communities” the center of the effort to coordinate and integrate health services delivery. The goal was to have local communities improve their “safety net” capabilities.¹¹⁹ The Family Health Clinic was awarded a grant in October 2002 as the lead agency on a CAP project (which was eventually renamed HCAP for Healthy Communities Access Program). The manager of the new project, Maggie M., also hired by the Clinic in October 2002, worked very closely with PRYSE, regularly attending Steering Committee meetings from the time she was hired. Maggie M. had worked on a SS/HS site in Nassau County, and so she was well-poised to work with PRYSE, which she did, eventually to her own frustration and exhaustion; she was asked to take on more tasks for PRYSE than she had imagined (or for that matter been hired to conduct).

The Rockaway CAP/HCAP project was advertised as having grown out of the PRYSE Coalition. The partners in the new project called themselves the Rockaway Health Alliance (RHA). Much like PRYSE, the RHA in its proposal for federal funding claimed to be an existing coalition, this time of “health care and service providers” (CAP Proposal, June 30, 2002, p. 1). Besides the Family Health Clinic, which was the lead agency on the application, five other funded partners from PRYSE were also included as funded partners of the Rockaway Health Alliance: the Ministers Coalition, F·E·G·S, the Mediation Center, AllSector (a technology firm hired for building the infrastructure of the project, AllSector is a for-profit corporation and subsidiary of F·E·G·S) and the

¹¹⁹ In health and sometimes social service delivery, the “safety net” is a loose collection of providers that all offer services to a given population in a given geographic location.

Evaluation Team.¹²⁰ Several other CAP partners had visited PRYSE meetings or had direct links to PRYSE participants: The Action Center (a local, education-focused non-profit), the AIDS Center of Queens County, the Lighthouse, Inc., (another local non-profit that offers free EMT and ambulance training), and the Queens Borough Public Library. More than 20 unfunded partners were also listed as members of the Rockaway Health Alliance. All had agreed to join the new coalition based on its mission to “ensure access to health care and related services for all who live on the Rockaway Peninsula” (Ronda, Weikart, Van Ryzin, 2004, p. 3). The lion’s share of the grant request for the first year (which totaled \$1,120,582) would go the Family Clinic - \$247,000, half of that for various types of project management and administration and the other half for part-time staff for their primary care clinic. However, the Family Health Clinic also credited itself for an “in-kind contribution” of \$101,000, providing staff and office support from the PRYSE Community Resource Center. The next highest share of initial HCAP funding – about \$179,000 – went to AllSector for implementing the management information system. If we consider the relationship between F·E·G·S and AllSector, however, they received the largest total share of the HCAP grant, \$267,000, although they are technically separate entities. Finally, and importantly, the Ministers Coalition garnered more financial resources from their participation in this alliance than they had from PRYSE: \$130,000 for training

a cadre of 30 health advocates to reach out to the most difficult-to-reach residents living in housing developments, SRO’s, and basements including the undocumented, homeless, and those who go to soup kitchens (CAP Proposal, June 30, 2002, p. 28).

¹²⁰ I only learned of the relationship between AllSector and F·E·G·S in 2010 from an online presentation by one of their “executive consultants” (Miller, 2007, p. 3).

Rockaway Health Alliance would later receive follow-up funding from HCAP, for a total of \$2.5 million in federal grants during its lifetime. HCAP required that applicants include a “business plan to produce defined results.” In the case of the RHA, this revolved around a central electronic database that “allow[s] a single point of entry to members' services through a single assessment, an on-line referral system, and a tracking system.” This centerpiece proved problematic for many of the local “resident health advocates” who were trained in the course of the project (p. 2). In fact the referral system, as we came to call it, came to be seen as the bane of everyone’s existence, at least for those who were held accountable for its use, meaning the representatives of the funded partners, the health advocates, Maggie M. as RHA project manager, and me as the evaluator.

In the Rockaway Health Alliance, I had occasion to work more closely with Cassius C., from the Ministers Coalition, and came to see that his organization truly was interested in representing the “grassroots” of the Rockaway peninsula. He consistently argued that there were actually not just two but many “Rockaways” – not just divisions of neighborhoods or communities by race, but also finer divisions by class, ethnicity, language and mental health. This project gave him more of an opportunity to work directly with the “people in the basements” he had emphasized to PRYSE, and as he reiterated in the language he used in the CAP proposal. The Rockaway Health Alliance was focused more explicitly on the uninsured and under-insured, groups with low or no incomes and sometimes without documentation. But once again Cassius C. and his health advocates as an extension of his influence provided their own special challenges, as they resisted the “audit culture” more strenuously than any other participants. The

Family Health Clinic entered sixty-eight percent of all referrals into the electronic system, whereas the Ministers Coalition entered less than one percent. Repeatedly in the four years of the project, Cassius' resistance (which is how his relationship to the electronic system came to be understood) left Maggie M. and Brenda Z. in knots of frustration. By extension, I also became knotted as both turned to me to hold Cassius accountable via the evaluation, by which they really meant, "get him to use the referral system by telling him he is being held to account through the evaluation," which would then give them leverage not to pay his organization. In the end, Cassius "won" in the sense that he pushed for his advocates to use paper forms and had a staff member of the Ministers Coalition enter the data for the "referral system," but was still paid the money as agreed in the original memorandum of understanding.

The evaluation included another survey of Rockaway residents, this time a panel survey: a baseline survey in 2003 of 521 adults and a follow-up in 2005 with 102 adults from the original sample. In my final evaluation report to the RHA – by then I was functioning as the Evaluation Team on my own – I emphasized findings from that small sample, particularly those that highlighted the numbers that we had all by that time come to forefront in summaries that would be used to seek funding beyond the grant period. The finding in which we could have the most confidence, in terms of the activities funded by the grant – that residents reporting encounters with health advocates showed a significant increase – was perceived with disappointment from members of the RHA steering committee. They felt that they had worked hard and achieved much more than the percentages could reveal. They also expected to have more of an impact in terms of those percentages, despite my repeated assurances that contact with health advocates was

reported to have increased, significantly, from 14% in 2003 to 33% in 2005. I was reminded that Cassius C. had voiced his contention back in May 2005 that “Michelle cannot measure us” and that this view had framed more of my work in Rockaway than I had understood at the time.

But evaluators soldier on, so to speak, earning more than enough to defy Cassius’ belief. Among other findings, my final evaluation report for RHA highlighted the following:

The accomplishments of the RHA since its inception include having:

- Contributed to **significantly increasing** the percentage of Rockaway residents reporting **health care coverage**: from 88% in 2003 to 95% in 2005
- **Significantly increased** reports of resident **encounters with health advocates**: from 14% in 2003 to 33% in 2005
- Recruited and trained a pool of 50 adult health advocates and 20 teen health advocates who **actively engaged** hundreds of community residents in outreach and education about health care;
- Recorded **3,525** electronic referrals in the Management Information System since 2002... (emphasis in original, Ronda, 2006, p. 3).

Of course, the first finding, of an increase in reported health care coverage, would be tempered by my repeated caveats that we could not say definitively if the RHA had single-handedly accomplished this objective. But as it was among the most important “action steps” set in stone in the form of the initiative’s “project management matrix,” (PMM) we were more than obliged to front with it. The PMM was an optional, but “recommended,” device that the Family Clinic had employed in the grant application, thereby committing us to its use throughout the life of the project. A simple grid, it included rows of “action steps” that the alliance would take during the life of the project laid out with columns for timetables for each action step, the “responsible person or

organization” behind the action step, and details of “anticipated results.” By this time, well into 2006, Maggie M. was so drained by the thought of ever having to work with another matrix that she had already begun looking for another position. She had taken to cynically joking, as a small vent on her frustrations with Cassius C. and his health advocates, that she was “one of the people in the basements” who needed to get out of Rockaway, as her office at the Family Health Clinic was indeed deep inside its basement, a windowless, fluorescent “cave” as she understood it. It was near the end of our final reports to the feds on HCAP that she said to me, in all seriousness one day, after we had spent nearly eight hours in that basement entering information into the online reports’ required fields, “they will kill us all.”

Maggie’s despair was compounded by the realization, buttressed by analysis of some quantitative data I had gathered for the report, that despite having built a \$150,000 electronic referral system, which also included uncalculated person-hours spent by all of us involved in the project on training, data entry, follow-up and, especially in Maggie’s case, persuading, cajoling and sometimes pleading for funded partners to use the system, her own organization was the only one to really make use of it on a regular basis. One representative summed up the situation well for all of the HCAP-funded partners when she said that her agency would “not make online referrals; it is an illusion to pretend that we have program staff to do it.”

In the end, a comment quoted at the end of my RHA evaluation report captured the reflections of the partners I had interviewed, and also echoed the very same sense that hung over the end of the PRYSE project (to which we shall now return):

We made an impact but I think that Rockaway is and continues to be a closed community – it is not connected to the rest of the world – so we

established an increased level of trust for people who come in for services, but it will take more time. There was a lot of money put in to the grant, but a long lasting impact takes more than three years. We reached people; and the adult health advocates did so as well, and brought information to people who are often isolated. This was the tip of the iceberg – there is more work to be done.

July 2003 – PRYSE at Its Peak

The original three-year federal funding period for PRYSE ran out in July 2003, at a time when the Coalition reached the height of its activities and hopes for a sustainable future remained alive. On the next page, Figure 5.2 shows a graphic from our July 2003 report to the federal authorities, detailing the shape of the initiative at the end of the original funding period, right before we would apply for and receive a one-year “no-cost extension.” By this time, the newly configured NYC Education Department Region 5 had a representative at the table, Andre L., who appeared regularly at the Steering Committee, but also at as many public gatherings as possible. The Region was hard at work to meet its constituents. Brenda Z. had reached out to the new superintendent in April 2003, eventually recruiting him as a Steering Committee “open forum” keynote speaker, along with the District Attorney, in February 2004. Andre L. represented the school region during this time in all of the PRYSE-related matters shown in Figure 5.2, except for the “Early Childhood” work group.

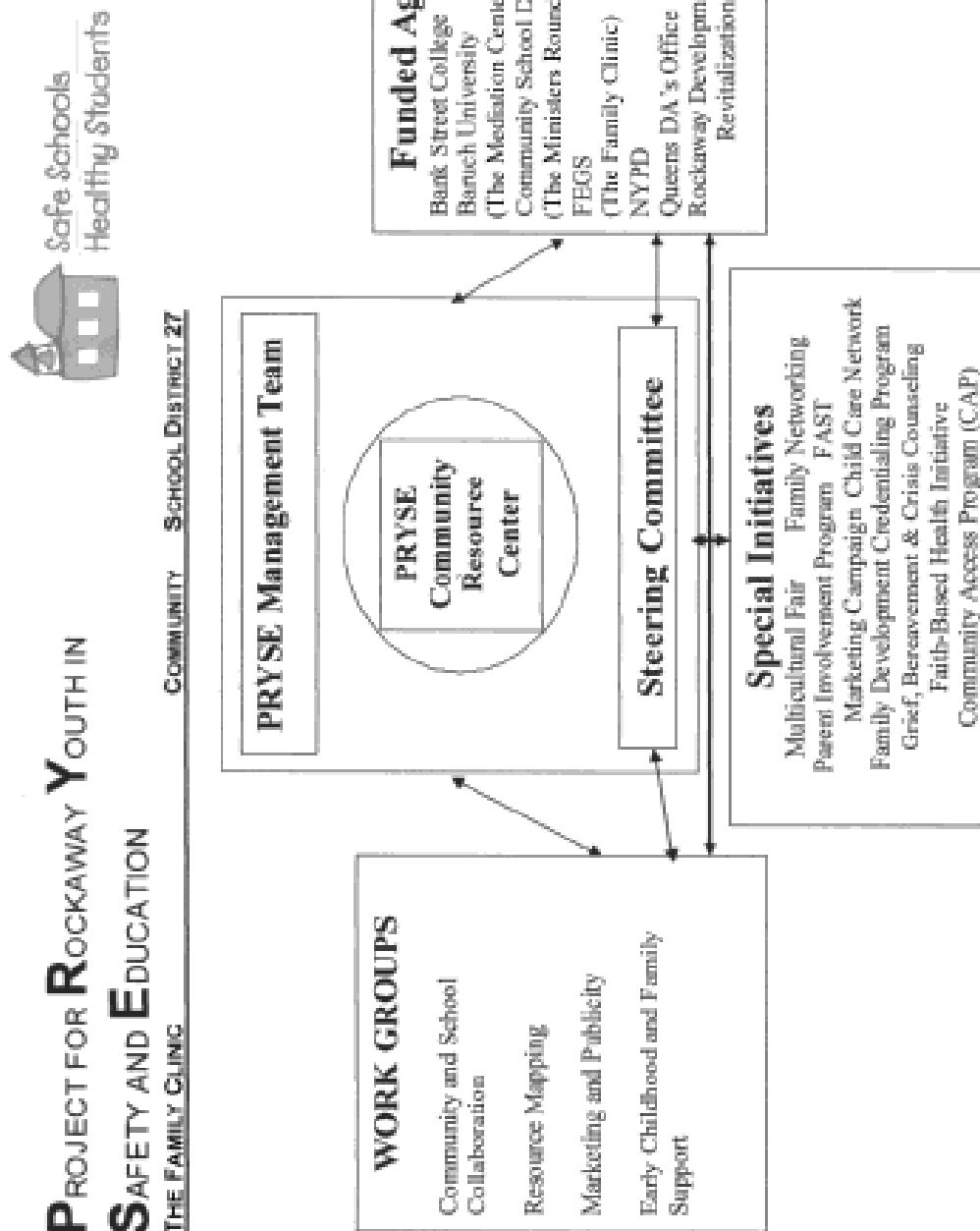


Figure 5.3. Map of PRYSE Coalition Structure and Activities At the End of the SS/HS Funding Period, July 2003.

October 2003 – The Woman From Region 5

It is October 2003. After years of almost entirely polite, if occasionally passionate and frustrated negotiations around the table of the PRYSE Steering Committee and other PRYSE-related bodies, a few PowerPoint slides about the public schools are about to prompt raised voices, heated whispering, and the only direct mention of race since the initiative's beginnings. The new school year began last month, after the implementation in the summer of the most radical restructuring of the New York City school system in many decades (the last legal obstacle to the overhaul was cleared in June 2003, when state legislators and the Bloomberg administration settled a lawsuit about the changes).¹²¹ A year after Michael Bloomberg became the first mayor to gain direct control of the school system, the legendary, seemingly immortal Board of Education has been abolished, its Brooklyn offices at 100 Livingston Street vacated. The system of 1.1 million students is now managed by a new NYC Department of Education under Chancellor Joel Klein, not an educator but a successful lawyer and businessman, and out of a new headquarters at the Tweed Building in Manhattan across from City Hall.¹²² Community school districts are no more. They have been reconfigured into far larger "regions," a bureaucratic tectonic shift in which Wayne G., our own schools liaison to PRYSE, was but a particle reassigned to a new office at first unknown to us. Our new schools liaison is Andre L., and one of his superiors, a representative from Region 5

¹²¹ The regions were dissolved in 2007 under another restructuring plan implemented by Mayor Bloomberg.

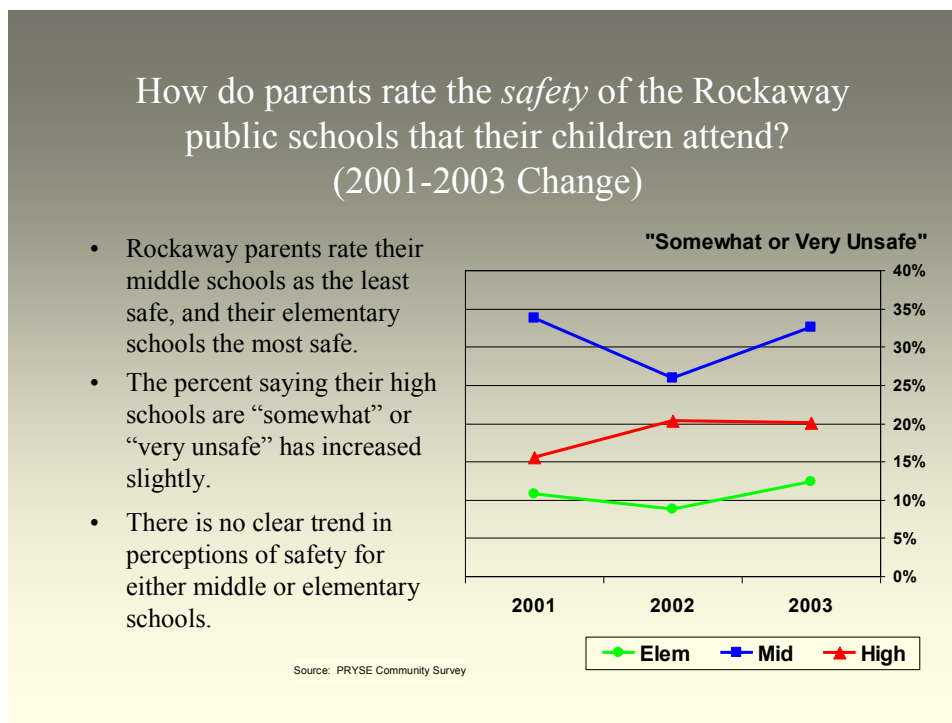
¹²² As Mayor Bloomberg put it, "I was elected largely on the basis of my business background. I think New Yorkers expect me to run city government in much the same way I ran my company" (as quoted by Zelon, 2009, para. 4). It is by now well-known that Joel Klein is one among a nationwide trend of appointing non-educators to educational leadership, particularly those bringing a free-market ideology to bear on public education.

which now includes the Rockaway peninsula, is attending the PRYSE Steering Committee meeting for perhaps the second or third time since assuming her new position.

We all watch as my Baruch College colleague, the lead faculty member contracted for the Evaluation Team, shares a presentation on the data that we have gathered in the course of our three annual phone surveys. When he arrives at the first of a series of slides about public schools, entitled “Where do Rockaway parents send their children and teens to school?” a small wave of tension makes its way around the table, originating with the Region’s representative. The slide shows that “parents increasingly send their children to schools outside the Rockaways as the children grow older, especially for high school.” Our survey also asked parents who do not send their children to Rockaway public schools to state the reasons why. My colleague, reviewing the results on the next slide, explains that our respondents said that “**too much violence** in the schools is the main reason for avoiding Rockaway public middle and especially high schools” (emphasis in original). By now, I have begun scribbling notes in the margins of my notebook. These indicate that the representative from Region 5 is heatedly whispering to Andre L., apparently agitated over the direction the presentation is taking.

My colleague posts what turns out to be the most offending slide of all, titled, “How do parents rate the *safety* of the Rockaway public schools that their children attend?” (see Figure 5.4, below). By now, the representative from Region 5, a white, middle-aged woman, can no longer contain her anger at what must have seemed to her to be a personal affront on the schools. She interrupts and blurts out that if we are “going to be presenting data like that,” she will tell “my boss **not** to come to your public meeting.”

She is referring to the forthcoming public PRYSE meeting, at which the new regional superintendent is planned as the keynote speaker.



**Figure 5.4: PRYSE Community Survey Results:
Parents Rate Safety of Rockaway Public Schools, October 2003.**

Her exclamation at first is met by stunned silence. The official minutes from the meeting say only that we had a “disagreement,” because Brenda Z. later requests that I write the incident up as “small,” after she reviews my original set of minutes. Thus the published minutes, below, do not include the heart of the conversation, only the surface:

A small disagreement arose over the community survey results on the public schools, as representatives from the school district believed that those data might paint an unfairly negative picture of the schools. Other meeting attendees believed that community residents know what the problems are in local schools and that to ignore or avoid those problems was not going to inspire the community's confidence. (PRYSE Steering Committee minutes, October 2003).

A curiosity of our democratic age is that governmental involvement in an initiative such as PRYSE means that there are to be “no politics.” However, in the room that day, the reaction to the Region representative’s interruption of my colleague’s presentation is a long silence, with an undercurrent of anger. I am personally defensive. Several people ask her to clarify. Why is she threatening to warn her superintendent against a public meeting, when these slides are only a very small cross-section of a much larger body of work? She tells us that the data are “clearly biased against the schools, and should not be presented publicly.” To his credit, my colleague calmly explains that we used sophisticated sampling methods, weighted our data, and asked questions common to other surveys of general perception of public schools. He repeats that these are only a few questions in a much larger survey, and points out that less than half of the parents reported perceiving the schools to be “somewhat or very unsafe.”

I am less calm. I tell the Region representative that she is being unreasonable. I am sitting at the end of the table with almost all of the African American and Latino people in the room. The Region 5 liaison to PRYSE, Andre L., also African American, sits near us and is clearly taken aback, not only by his boss’s comment but also by the association he has as her subordinate. Many of us at my end of the table mutter angrily to each other, while Brenda Z. tries to get everyone back on track.

Andre L. offers a comment that directly counters his superior’s view, saying that it would be an insult to many in the community to pretend that there is no room for improvement in the schools, and to avoid facing criticism by hiding data like what we are presenting to the group. People are a bit stunned at this, because Andre L. is among the

most well-respected, gracious, soft-spoken and diplomatic members of the Coalition at this time. After his comment, Jack P. (activist, resident, chair of the Community Development committee and PRYSE participant from the beginning) asks the woman from Region 5 to reconsider her original reaction. He agrees with Andre L. that ignoring problems can lead the community to be distrustful, not only of the schools but also of groups like PRYSE. She answers that she will reconsider, but that she believes the survey data need more “contextualization.”

Aria, the executive director of a local non-profit focused on in-school and afterschool academic and recreation programming, takes this opportunity to speak as a parent, and as an African American resident of the peninsula. She says that when it comes to “our babies,” she does not think that any criticism of the schools meant to serve “our babies” can or should be dismissed. It is a powerful moment because when Aria says “our babies” she seizes race, residence and school ownership all in one. No one has anything to add, aside from nods of agreement. After this, we take a short break. Oscar M. and I decide that we wish it was happy hour.

When we come back, the agenda calls for a discussion of Beach Channel High School (BCHS), which in 2003 is a school where over half of the students attending are “black” and almost one-third are “Hispanic” – in short, an ethnoracial minority majority school on the Rockaway peninsula. Until last year this school was under the tenure of an African American principal, beloved by most, who presided for the five years from April 1997 to June 2002. (This is the same principal who barred our attempt to conduct the federal SS/HS survey at his school, framing it as a defense of his students. He left the school after being appointed as the superintendent of another Region.) More recently, the

school has undergone a series of disruptions, including what are described as a student and parent uprising and a “police incident.” We have heard that eight Beach Channel students have been suspended in the last month, and our meeting is now supposed to hear a report. The woman from Region 5, being higher on the authority chain than Andre L., starts explaining these incidents to us, but soon we see her storytelling strengths lie in obscuring as much as she reveals. It becomes apparent that the issue is so politically sensitive that she is struggling to explain it without revealing a bias. My personal (field) notes (well-concealed from my colleagues around the table) reveal that I am still somewhat unglued, as I write, “Why can’t she just spit it out?!”

Eventually, others fill in the details on one of the stories: There had been a fight in the courtyard of Bay Towers, a nearby affordable housing complex, after school, and the conflict escalated further in the following days. The police were involved, but did not communicate with the high school. Some youth were arrested. A month of discord at the school ensued. Andre L. concedes that the school could have been more proactive about the incident, but was not. Josh K., perhaps pondering a missed opportunity for mediation, points out that victims and perpetrators often end up at the same school with no resolution of their conflicts.

But now we learn that other, far more newsworthy and contentious events are also unfolding at Beach Channel High School. Earlier this month, about 400 students, accompanied by their parents, staged a walk-out from their classes. Along with the NAACP and other local politicians, they are demanding the reinstatement of a popular assistant principal, a Haitian man who has been dismissed by the new principal, who is a white female. We learn that this new principal is in fact the *second* principal since the

departure of the old popular one last year, and that she replaced an African American female who served as the interim principal for a few tension-filled months, and was then transferred. The local paper, *The Wave*, is fueling the fire by accusing the fired assistant principal, parents, politicians and the local NAACP of turning the dispute into a “racial issue” (“Why play the race card...?”, 2003). The *New York Post* predictably is following suit with an interpretation of “racial” that over-simplifies the NAACP’s argument (Campanile, 2003).

In short, the community is speaking and the lady from Region 5 is discomfited to report it. She explains the events from the perspective of the current principal, but Jack P., who attended a contentious PTA meeting a few days ago, presents a different story. The undisputed facts are that the new white, female principal of BCHS held a “cabinet meeting” last month, in September 2003. The new principal alleges that the Haitian (in some reports referred to as an “African American”) male assistant principal made threatening statements during that meeting, and therefore obtained his suspension for insubordination. The assistant principal apparently was trying to clarify rumors that the new principal intended to eliminate a bunch of the assistant principals; according to the new principal, he threatened her by claiming that he had already gotten rid of previous principals (I only learned this fuller version of the story much later, from court case documents). Jack P. however tells us that according to eyewitnesses who were present at this cabinet meeting, and whom he met at the PTA meeting, the assistant principal never made the supposed threats. Many parents are now supporting a petition for the reinstatement of the popular assistant principal.

At this point, ever the mediator, Josh K. attempts to sum up all of the comments so far by stating that there is a conflict over events and their meaning, which is true enough. The resident/activists around the table explain that the problem partly lies in the school's poor sharing of information with the student body. Students had held the Haitian assistant principal in high esteem, and were angered at initially receiving almost no information after his summary removal.¹²³

At our meeting, people begin to ask what is happening below the surface of the situation. Jack P., Aria, Andre L. and a few others agree that there are both "turf issues and deep racial issues" festering, recurrent, and undealt with at the schools. One says that these things were happening 20 years earlier and are happening again. These African American coalition members see the current tensions as an expression of underlying troubles. Many around the table see the student protest – and a degree of accompanying chaos, such as the pulling of fire alarms – as cause for serious concern. The first fire alarm served as the signal for the walk-out, but fire alarms were pulled again several times in the following days. (In my private notes, although I no longer know if I said it aloud or only to myself, I write that perhaps a student and parent walk-out is actually a sign of great hope.) Aria tells us that parent anger is high and the staff is demoralized. She also takes the opportunity to promote her own non-profit and to publicly scold the

¹²³ About 10 days after this discussion at the PRYSE Steering Committee, the new, white principal was fired from her position at Beach Channel High School. Years later I learned that she filed a suit against the Department of Education for discrimination "against her on the basis of race." She claimed that the new Region 5 superintendent removed her "to quiet the racial tension created by the black community," but ultimately the court found no evidence of discrimination (Pleener v. New York City Board of Education, 2007, appeal dismissed in 2009). In her suit, the fired principal alleged that she was so frightened at an emergency PTA meeting to discuss the removal of the Haitian assistant principal that she hired a bodyguard and left early, out the back door, on the recommendation of the same superintendent who would later fire her (Pleener v. New York City Board of Education, 2007). The suit also justifies her decision not to hold an assembly of the students to address their concerns because "once gathered together, they could riot" (Pleener v. New York City Board of Education, 2007).

school district for not responding to her attempts at contact. (Her non-profit engages in advocacy on behalf of parents and children in local public schools. The chagrined Region 5 representative takes down Aria's contact information during this exchange and promises to contact her, but I don't know if that ever happened.)

At this point, Maggie M., who has worked on another SS/HS project in Nassau, comments that SS/HS was meant to bring together the "important players," but she has concluded that "it doesn't work, because the schools are not listening." All around the table there are affirmations of agreement that the schools are not listening. At this point the lady from Region 5 has nothing left to say. Maggie M. reflects that the way most of the SS/HS sites work, you first have police, schools and mental health at the table, and then you bring the community. She doubts this is the best way to address the kinds of issues we are discussing at the meeting.

There is an after-meeting among a smaller, more informal group. Maggie M. confides that we are at a moment of "all this hope about the change in the Department of Education, but if this district is any indication, it is not looking good." Aria says that in general, the Department of Education is "not listening to community, not looking at what it means, and not asking people what they want" (PRYSE notes, 2003). Aria and Jack P. comment that at today's meeting, Andre L. "became a black man" (to much laughter from those of us left at the table) because after months of relative silence about controversies of any kind, he had stood up to the woman from Region 5, and had also supported comments by others about the perception gap between the African American public-school parent community and the white school administrators and observers. The politics were rough; as someone at the meeting pointed out, such views (and even the

supporting data) can fuel the fires of division. Furthermore, the kinds of problems that face the peninsula cannot be solved in one meeting, or even in three years worth of meetings.

Learning and Applying “Communities That Care”®

By the summer of 2003, the Coalition had begun working more closely with the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Specifically, PRYSE personnel, including me, attended trainings paid for by OASAS. One motivation was absolutely the hope that some funding might come to the Coalition via this connection. It was within these OASAS trainings that we all became more familiar with the “Communities That Care” (CtC) paradigm that had influenced SS/HS, and that one of the consultants had mentioned to us already in the early weeks of PRYSE. As discussed in Chapter 1, CtC was created by Hawkins and Catalano, and it drew its greatest federal support from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which would eventually purchase the rights to all of its materials. At the time, we were being trained by consultants from Channing-Bete, Inc., which still owned the rights. We also became intimately familiar with what is known as “PRISMS,” the Prevention Risk Indicator Services Monitoring System, about which everyone working in the substance abuse field in New York State was widely aware, but which few people in the PRYSE Coalition had encountered before. We used PRISMS data to work on our risk and protective factor prioritization, as (I would learn later) those data are also firmly rooted in the Hawkins/Catalano “social development model.”

These training events proved lucrative to me personally, as I made a connection with a coalition from Staten Island that bore the name of the system (the Staten Island CTC Coalition), and contracted to work with them on data collection and analysis in 2005 and 2006. PRYSE was using the opportunity, as Brenda Z. put it, “to begin to develop a strategic plan from this point forward,” specifically in that she wanted the Coalition to apply for grant money earmarked to implement “best practice models,” as was heavily advocated by both SAMHSA and OASAS. We would get a small amount of money in the end, but only to work on the perfection of the “risk and protective factor” model for the Rockaways. We would also make some connections with the Children’s Aid Society, which was working very closely with OASAS thanks to their “Prevention Resource Center,” in which both are partners with New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHOMH).

As a result, in June 2003, I received a \$2,000 “data collection” grant from the Children’s Aid Society to work with a group of students living in the Rockaways on a project about neighborhood improvement. This project was also an extension of the CtC process, and unless we followed the process, we would be ineligible for the grant. I used the money to pay the six students with whom I worked over several weeks as we learned how to conduct observations in the neighborhood (we had to focus on alcohol and tobacco advertising). We also learned to interpret the PRISMS data, another requirement of the funding. The students were put off by the concepts underlying the data, something I had not wholly anticipated. During one of the early sessions, in which I distributed a sheet on “risk factors” of youth in the Rockaways, I noted in field notes the reaction of

one of the young women in the group, and would later include this section verbatim in my report to the Children's Aid Society on the results of our data collection effort:

One of the young women in the group is a teenager and pregnant. The risk factor for problem behavior includes both "low birth weight births" and "out of wedlock births" as indicators. Additionally, "teenage births" is an indicator of "problem behavior," which includes other indicators such as "youth crimes" and PINS (persons in need of supervision) petitions. These indicators generated much discussion among the group of young people over how best to conceptualize the challenges teenagers face, and how to engage them in a process of improvement of their communities without alienating them in the process. Grouping criminal activity with teenage births and abortions made mathematical sense, but conceptually these combinations were difficult for this group to accept. (Ronda, July 30, 2003, p. 2).

Although we were charged with collecting data on alcohol and tobacco advertising, as noted above, I used it as an opportunity to hold a discussion of the process. I asked the six teenagers, all students at Far Rockaway High School, to reflect on our finding that "of 6 grocery or deli stores in the area immediately surrounding Far Rockaway High School, we discovered an average of 5 advertisements for alcohol and 4 advertisements for cigarettes on the windows and doors of those establishments." The group came to the conclusion that a much more pressing concern for their community is the abundance of abandoned and neglected properties, as well as the trash that often fills the lots of these properties. Before we had engaged in the process of observing the neighborhood surrounding their school block-by-block and in exquisite detail, they hadn't considered gathering evidence of just how empty and dirty the place looked to them. We took the opportunity to report findings on areas of concern to the appropriate City departments (for example, to sanitation to request public trash collection bins where none were present at the subway entrance and litter was scattered far and wide). I sent

follow-up letters to the youth involved, but after the funding ended, I did not hear from them, nor did I contact them, again.

Our relationship to OASAS ended when the Coalition disbanded, but by fall of 2003, we did not yet know that would happen within a year.

2003-2004 – The End of PRYSE

The three-year period of SS/HS funding for PRYSE ended officially on June 30, 2003. By this time the Coalition had not found a means to “leverage” the original funds into sufficient additional monies from other sources for sustainability of the implemented programs, although many or most of these programs did continue their operations as before for some months (such as off-the-shelf programs continuing under the purview of partner institutions). Earlier in the year the Coalition had applied, and received from SS/HS, a “no-cost extension” authorizing it to continue as an SS/HS program for the period from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004. In the June 30, 2003 report, Brenda Z. repeated a point that she and Josh K. had been invoking throughout the past year: “We have come to recognize that our work as a coalition must be ‘vision driven’ rather than ‘fund driven.’” It remained unclear what constituted this vision, beyond the one we had already agreed to at several day-long retreats and meetings, or how a vision was supposed to stand alone without funding for those implementing it, and in the absence of the grassroots mobilization that PRYSE had avoided.

At our January 2004 Steering Committee meeting, Cassius C. was angry that he had been left out of a meeting with the Charles Hayden Foundation, which concentrates on serving youth in New York City and Boston, and which had approached the

Partnership for After School Education (PASE) late in 2003 about the Rockaways. PASE contacted five youth-serving organizations on the peninsula, all of which were involved with PRYSE activities, funded and not, “to get a sense of extent to which the community can be organized here in the Rockaways” (PRYSE Steering Committee, November 21, 2003, p. 2). But by the time a formal meeting was held between Hayden and Rockaway organizations, the Ministers Coalition had not been asked to participate. Brenda Z. explained that although she had been included in the meeting, the decision of “which players to pick” was not hers, but was the foundation’s own. To my knowledge, only one Far Rockaway-based organization that was originally contacted received any money from the foundation for a stand-alone program, and that did not happen until 2006. This did lead us, however, to discuss future funding, as the end of our extension was looming.

Brenda Z. had been faithfully reviewing any and all opportunities for funding with the grant writer from the Family Health Clinic. They had concluded, in Brenda’s words, that “the current funding opportunities (were) very research-based” meaning that the funding was geared to doing research and which would not really move forward the agenda of the Coalition. We also learned at the meeting that a new community development corporation (CDC) was being created, although it had already been incorporated since 1999, from the tenants’ associations at the former Edgemere and Arverne Houses. With assistance from Paul D. from Queens Library, who was then the chair of the CDC’s board, the organization would hire an executive director, and have a “coming out” party in January of 2005.¹²⁴ This executive director and Paul D. would eventually have a conflict in which I was directly involved during my time as evaluator

¹²⁴ Coincidentally, I knew the woman who became the Executive Director of the Ocean Bay CDC as she and I had worked closely on the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation-sponsored Neighborhood Partners Initiative. She was staff with the Abyssinian Development Corporation at the time.

of Weed & Seed in Far Rockaway, a key moment in my role as evaluator to which we will return in Chapter 6.

But back at this January 2004 meeting of PRYSE, Cassius C. was still frustrated. As Brenda laid out all the plans for the new CDC, he remarked that there were so many coalitions and groups forming to make a change, but that he saw that they were not doing anything. Brenda turned his comments into an opportunity to remind him that “people feel hopeless and helpless and want to foster a change” and she disagreed with his assessment: “There has been a real change; people are starting to believe that change is possible.” But Cassius persisted, and I believe he was expressing what others around the table may have also felt, after hearing how few opportunities for funding existed to apply for and to sustain the work of the Coalition: “People are duplicating PRYSE instead of coming together.” So PRYSE had become something by then, at the very least to the participants around the table, but more importantly to the representative from the organization that had, materially, benefited least from it initially.

By February 2004, the new regional education superintendent, Kathleen Cashin, was speaking at a PRYSE community meeting along with Queens DA Richard Brown. This was an important meeting as the coalition was announcing its accomplishments over the three-year grant period and presenting the findings of the local evaluation. For the first time since the SS/HS funding had begun, Brenda Z. decided that she would not moderate the meeting, but instead asked Cassius C. and the representative from the Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation to share the moderator role that day. The report to the community from PRYSE was also an opportunity for Cashin to address residents of the peninsula where, as we’ve seen above, things had devolved at

one of the local high schools the previous fall. Cashin was proactive and had obviously done her homework: among her first remarks was that she knew the peninsula was home to “multifaceted groupings of people” and that in fact, “there was no way that Rockaway is one community.” She spoke only briefly about the safety of students, and not at all about health, but she did emphasize that she expected, from all the schools in her region (which included schools off the peninsula), a “nurturing environment that is safe.” Her approach, she explained, was to “reach out to the community and also to do what I know works.” She spent the bulk of her time laying out all of the changes that she had made or would soon make to the schools in the area and ended by explaining that she was “here to make change, not go slow,” but reminded the audience that it was not just her making changes: “it has to be **us**” (emphasis in original comments).

I presented our evaluation findings at the meeting, which was attended by nearly 100 people. Initially, I had planned to focus on accomplishments and challenges, but the steering committee and my evaluator colleagues decided that I should leave challenges off the agenda. I focused on ten goals that the Coalition had set (and this was really my own retrospective imposition of goals to fit the accomplishments that needed to be emphasized). The information was well-received and there was none of the frustration or resentment of the kind that had emerged at the very first meeting we had held. The money was evaporating, and Brenda Z. was reassuring that as long as the groups continued to meet as partners, we would work to improve the lives of children, youth and families on the peninsula. But it was becoming clear, at the next few, non-public Steering Committee meetings, that everyone still participating – and by now it was almost exclusively representatives from funded agencies – had begun to enter what

Brenda called “the survival mentality.” The only way she saw to overcome it was for PRYSE to become its own 501(c)3; to move from Coalition to non-profit organization.

We would return to this theme repeatedly as the funding ran out, and as we continued to meet for the rest of the year. But people were still working together. In particular, in April 2004, Oscar M. and Andre L. announced that as a result of “networking in the PRYSE meetings” they had launched a new initiative at Far Rockaway High School to empower young males there. It is noteworthy here and covered below, as this was one of the few initiatives, begun well into the life of the Coalition, that was implemented and sustained without funding through the Coalition.

By May 2004, we had decided that PRYSE should continue to exist even though funding was exhausted. By July 2004, the Coalition met at an all-day, off-site retreat to discuss whether and how to move forward, now that funding had ended. Representatives from every previously-funded agency, save two, were present; absent were Bank Street College and the New York City Police Department precincts from the Rockaways. The meeting was dominated by the two people who regularly dominated the meetings: the representative from the Family Health Clinic and the executive director of the mediation organization. We wanted to decide how to move PRYSE forward. But this time, the executive director of the Clinic was also present. He made it clear that Brenda’s position could not be subsidized to continue her work with PRYSE. He explained that the funding that supported her position to do this work was over, and we would need to decide how we wanted to be structured. This did not sit well with Cassius, who said that he was stunned that the director had begun the “conversation by cutting us off at the knees.” But the director was firm; he said this was not new information; that we all had to know that

Brenda could not continue to work on the project as she had done when she was funded to do so, and that the change in leadership would become a group decision.

Back in September 2002, the representative from OASAS had visited a Steering Committee meeting during which we were discussing the concern that the groups around the table were often competitors for the same grants. She suggested, and everyone agreed, that we use an “all call model” that had been successful for an upstate coalition, whereby any partner organization that encounters a grant that requires partnerships would announce the opportunity to the group. At the retreat, we faced the reality that only the Family Health Clinic had ever actually announced any of these opportunities. Representatives from other organizations explained that it can be difficult for them to manage and channel funds, if they were not wholly fiscally responsible for a grant that did not require a coalition or partnership. We did not think this model would continue to work, as it had not so far. We decided to keep the vision of the Coalition intact and then, as a next step, to decide how to structure ourselves.

By now I felt that we had been running in circles for months, and that feeling would remain until the hamster wheel finally stopped, late in 2004. We met again in September 2004 – the meeting was announced to all previous attendees to discuss the future work of PRYSE. By then, Bank Street, the Action Center and the Police Department were no longer at the table. We were stuck on whether we wanted to be an organization that does referrals or engages in direct service, but in the end Brenda decided that we should abandon the idea of direct service. By the October meeting we had also agreed to pursue the non-profit status that had been raised so many times before.

But Brenda was still quite involved in all of this activity and had even volunteered to work on the paperwork for incorporation.

Then an announcement at the November 2004 meeting changed everything. Brenda Z. told the Steering Committee that she had accepted a new position starting in January with a mental health services provider in Staten Island, and would be leaving her job at the Family Health Clinic after fourteen years. Some of us were stunned. But we began getting into the heart of the details of incorporating and soon saw how much money, time and effort would be required. We also started to realize how difficult it would be for various representatives around the table to participate unless they were doing *outside* their role as employees of the organizations they had represented at the PRYSE table until now. It is clear from my notes at the meeting that Brenda Z. was already letting go – one of the last comments she made was that it was up to “us” to decide what to do and for the first time she said “us” but wasn’t including herself.

The final meeting of the core of the PRYSE Coalition took place on December 17, 2004. Brenda Z. would be leaving her job at the Clinic within the week. The meeting was attended by representatives from QDA, the Queens Borough President’s office, the school region, the Clinic, the Queens Borough Public Library and the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. It began with several participants noting (and everyone agreeing) that there were no community residents at the meeting, and no representatives from any of the groups based in the community. A discussion followed about the role of service providers or “outsiders” to the community in efforts at community change. We were facing the reality that if those of us left around the table tried to become a non-profit, none of us were community residents. After that, only four

of us continued to meet (Andre L. from the school district, Maggie M. from the Clinic, Oscar M. from QDA and myself), trying to brainstorm some form in which the Coalition might continue at least a part of its work. By February 2005, the second month after Brenda Z.'s departure, the four of us finally gave up the ship.

Rockaway Men United

One of the few programs to be sustained after the end of PRYSE began without any funding. After a violent incident at one of the high schools on the peninsula, perhaps the strongest personal partnership to emerge from PRYSE was formed between Oscar M., Tom H. of the mediation organization, and Andre L., the last of the school liaisons. They and at least four other black and Latino men of leadership in organizations involved with the Coalition started meeting with groups of young men – mostly black and also Latino – in the high schools in November 2003. They began crafting what they called a “male empowerment program” for the students. By May 2004, the three men would report to the PRYSE Steering Committee meeting that:

...the group has had 6 sessions. Within the sessions, they have touched on issues of fatherhood, manhood, literacy, education, history, financial, and sustainability. Currently a college tour is being planned. To date the group has over 60 participants, a consistency of 28-30 in attendance and 10 who have attended all the sessions.

I asked Andre L. in a November 2004 interview to describe how the initiative had progressed:

The consensus was that things were getting out of control. We were dealing with young men and we thought having older men of color involved would work; we wanted to try to change way they think or at least try to teach them to pause and think before you act. We wanted to emphasize the fact that there is life beyond the Rockaways and they are in

control of their lives. One of the consistent messages is to take responsibility for their lives and decisions going forward. We do this on our own time.

We're calling it a "male empowerment group" and it is all an outgrowth of a community doing well or not. We concentrate on youth who will graduate in 3 years – they have an underlying interest in the community in which they live. If the community dies, they do too, literally or not. Right now we are five different people from five different organizations with five different goals, but we found a thread. The thread is that we all need a healthy community for our own jobs to mean anything. I'm from education, and from my view in education, if people are killing each other, there is nothing someone from education, politics, mediation, or justice can do. We cannot do anything to stop that. But maybe if we can reach young men and see that they are being empowered to control what goes on, they can learn "I'm in charge of myself." And hopefully the ripple effects will be felt tangibly.

“Rockaway Men United” (RMU) was the only organized activity born entirely of the Coalition that continued after PRYSE fell apart. Oscar M. was always enthusiastic about how well it was going for youth, and also for the sense of accomplishment and meaning he and the other partners got out of working with each other and with young men. He was most impressed by the confirmation that he gained from being consistent with youth:

I go back to the issue: If it's not consistent, children will not follow that example. In a case where [Tom H.] and myself where we are doing Rockaway Men United which is our empowerment group we come out and we are consistent. But on a weekly basis our numbers are growing.

He felt his work with RMU proved one of his most strongly held convictions about reducing violence: Children need regular attention and follow-through from adults with a strong sense of discipline.

Andre L.'s job with the school district proved crucial to allowing the group access to the public schools, as Oscar M. related. In his own role as a representative from the

District Attorney, Oscar M. normally experienced a high level of ascribed authority, and even had his own office within the school; but getting RMU started required someone with influence at the school district. Oscar M. pointed to these new personal links between representatives in different sectoral groups as one of the best things to come out of PRYSE:

So a lot of the new relationships that we have now are those that were formed as a result of... you're right, formed as a result or through PRYSE itself. That would not have existed because everyone would have been stratified. This is my end, this is your end, which is sad because a lot of nonprofits do that now. You see that out here already. You don't have to go that far; you can see it out here. How everyone just sticks to what they are good at and don't want to share the wealth of that; the wealth in terms of the students, the children who need the services.

RMU met once a week in the high school and covered a different topic each week, but all focused on the journey into manhood and the challenges and successes along that path. According to Oscar M., the school administrators, staff and school safety agents all helped to increase the numbers of young men coming to RMU meetings, including youth who:

have been on that side of the fence. They are not leaning on the fence. They are on the side of the fence with they are almost falling into that pitfall of arrests and drug use and all that other stuff. And they know they will benefit from it. It pulls them into it. When we walk into the school they can't wait for us to get started.

RMU had another male leader when it first started: a pastor who founded and ran a Far Rockaway evangelical Christian non-profit agency training emergency medical technicians and providing health education to youth. Pastor V., who died in his early forties in 2005 suffering from diabetes, had begun promoting himself and his organization as the “main conduit” for the work of RMU. Oscar M. explained that this

led to “a lot of in-fighting and disagreements,” which finally resulted in the high school principal telling RMU, “I don’t want any of you here... I don’t trust (Pastor V.) around my students.” RMU was eventually permitted to continue its work without the pastor.

Oscar M. insisted that the disagreement with the pastor went beyond my assumption that “everyone wants to take credit for the success.” His office, the Borough President’s Office, the RDRC, the school district, Community Mediation Organization and Rockaway activist-resident Jack P. were all among “the major players from Rockaway on board” with RMU. Oscar M. said this good company brought Pastor V. credibility and clout by association. Pastor V.’s announcement of responsibility for the good work of many exploited the reputations and power of other groups. In the end, Oscar M., who experienced a sense of identification with the residents, was forced into the acute awareness that his affiliation with QDA brought serious “clout.” He was frustrated by the attempts of the pastor – in this case, a local – to stake a claim to some of that status. His conclusion about Pastor V.’s dismissal from the RMU and the school was, “It’s a sad thing.”

Race, Class and Legitimacy in the 'Hood – Post-Mortem With Oscar M.

At the final formal meeting of the Coalition in December 2004, Oscar M. from the QDA was vocal in accusing certain politicians and neighborhood institutions of exploiting local tragedies for their own grandstanding. He remarked that politicians would often “have stupid town hall meetings” which were only meant to highlight their commitment, whenever it would bring them the most press. Expanding on the lack of unity among community players in the Rockaways, he said that “even the churches are

territorial... they work with the under-served community, but only serve their congregations.” In his recollection, “we were fighting about money” starting from the very first PRYSE meeting.

During an official evaluation interview with QDA staff at the mid-point of the PRYSE Coalition’s work, I had asked their representatives to reflect on the successes and shortcomings of the PRYSE Initiative as part of a process documenting each funded partner’s perspective. Such data are meant to help shape the management of projects like these, but by the end of PRYSE any insights gained in the earlier stages had generally gone unheeded.

At the mid-point interview, one QDA staff member commented that

*pulling the Rockaway community into PRYSE has not been successful. The community is not integrated in a meaningful way, and as this is a requirement of the federal government from whom the grant has come, we need to find a way to do this. **The community is hostile to PRYSE** (emphasis mine).*

The QDA staff apportioned none of the blame for that to their own office, although they were also key players in PRYSE.¹²⁵ In an interview with Oscar M. at the end of PRYSE, I asked him what he thought was missing, and what he would have liked to have seen done differently. His answer was immediate and passionate:

Two things: The first would have been community organizing. I think PRYSE did not accomplish that role of organizing the community. You still have the community that will not organize. It’s very separate, stratified amongst themselves. That was one of the things that have not been done. I serve as an advisor for a group... in Jamaica. And their forte is community organizing. Their budget is probably one-tenth of what

¹²⁵ An obvious question, when we return more generally to developments in prosecution and policing strategies in Chapter 6, is to what extent the policies of the law enforcement and justice institutions, even with the best of intentions, may indeed serve to engender neighborhood alienation and hostility.

PRYSE's budget was. And they operate on a paste-string budget.¹²⁶ (Laughter) And they have been very effective in terms of some of the services that they focused. And that's where a lot of things are lacking.

However, community organizing has a reputation for being conspicuously political, and is hard to imagine when crafting programs with government funds and with agencies and organizations that have strict prohibitions against explicitly political activities.

As for the second difference Oscar M. would have liked to see, it encapsulates the struggle that comprehensive community initiatives often face: the difficulty of negotiating the breadth and depth of missions when organizations come together for the sake of funding:

There's a lack of focus. You get sidetracked in terms of what our goals and issues should be. And we strayed away from our mission, it's overly broad. And because it's overly broad it allows us to fluctuate and because we fluctuate we miss out on the bigger picture serving the people... I think if we did a bigger part in terms of organizing community, we [would] have [had] better cooperation, especially at the steering committee level. Because at that point you are showing the community that they have a stake, regardless of the financial contributions. You can always say to them, we're applying for the funding, come on board with us. We will help you apply for it so you can get funding... [Instead] everyone is duplicating each other [in their activities, competing] but it's not collectively working for the common good. And that's why it was doomed to fail.

In striving for its six explicit goals in the advancement of safety and health among students, the PRYSE Coalition was supposed to bring community members to the table.

¹²⁶ In Jamaica, Oscar M. was advising a Latino organization; he is Puerto Rican, as is the author. Pasteles are a traditional Puerto Rican Christmas holiday food made of dough and filled with meat; they are wrapped in banana leaves and parchment paper, and tied with thin white cotton string. His reference in English shorthand would be “shoe string” budget.

“But as long as people are taken out of the picture” of actual decision-making, Oscar M. maintained, “they are not organizing; they will never be part of the stake.”

Oscar M. also articulated a common refrain within organizations working in urban neighborhoods beset by drug and gun violence: generations of young people seem “predetermined” to attract the negative attention of the criminal justice system.

It's sad because by the age of 14 or 15, half of the cops already know one child because he has been arrested. I could name you names to the cop, “Oh yeah, I know his family.” A lot of the things that these kids are facing are generational issues. They stem from generations of problems. And if you give a child the opportunity to not fall into that same line of generational issues, then you have a good chance of saving that child, and that child becoming successful.

The motivation to “save children” was common across participants in PRYSE. These good intentions were problematic, particularly when they were expressed by people not residing on the peninsula, i.e., the majority of those involved in PRYSE.

Oscar M. and his colleagues wielded substantial influence over and were paid to attend most PRYSE functions. The funding the QDA received – though quite limited by comparison to the Clinic or the CMO – permitted them to have regular, intimate contact with youth and adults from the peninsula. They continued to engage in moral suasion with youth, ranging from telling them to tuck in a shirt tail or cut a “big afro” to investigating serious, violent crimes – and they also did this with adults who participated in community meetings. I recall an outside consultant to PRYSE who, when she questioned the legitimacy of the way money was being spent on Weed & Seed, was asked by a QDA staff member whether she was “leading an inquisition” or, more ominously, **if she was associated with the families of known drug dealers on the peninsula.**

When the PRYSE initiative began, the QDA said it would concentrate on “out of school time” work (such as the summer internships and recreation activities) but they spent substantial resources within schools. In material submitted by QDA for the final PRYSE evaluation in 2003, their office claimed that over the years of the PRYSE-funded STAR Track,

*principals of targeted schools (in particular Middle Schools *** and ***) reported a reduction in disciplinary incidents, suspensions, and detentions in the STAR Track classrooms, as well as fewer absences on STAR Track days, which they attribute to the program.*

At a PRYSE community meeting in November 2003, the Evaluation Team highlighted these QDA accomplishments: “established [a] consistent presence on the peninsula [and] networked with schools, community members and organizations.” These accomplishments were selected by the QDA, in the absence of “measurable outcomes” aside from the large numbers of students served. (Their high average of students involved over the course of the project was largely due to the “Say No to Violence, Say Yes to Tennis” event, which drew 1,000 youth from the area each year for three years.)

Oscar M.’s frustration over the “death of PRYSE” was unique to his involvement in the initiative. He alone from QDA spent many hours both on the peninsula and at many community-related meetings, as well as having spent his own money to buy school supplies or even lunch for students. He bemoaned how the local public schools suffer a relative absence of funding (whether private or from Parent-Teachers Associations) for creative and recreational outlets, such as art and band. He and many of his colleagues bought paper, pencils and dictionaries with money out of their own pockets because these

necessities were lacking at the schools in which they worked.¹²⁷ The lack of dictionaries for the students was mentioned on several occasions, so stunned was Oscar M. by this observation.

Another of Oscar M.'s colleagues shared his frustration over local politics and the limitations of participating in comprehensive community initiatives: Rebecca J., who spent much of her time on the Weed & Seed project. As a full Assistant D.A., her presence was required at gatherings where QDA leadership must show more discretion and authority. The other members of QDA were pleased with the work in which they had engaged over the four years, and which PRYSE funds had made possible, but they were also clear – particularly during our final interviews – that community change takes much longer than the period given to the initiative. In that spirit, QDA would continue to pay for the community assistants first hired with PRYSE funds. Oscar M. was – as of 2010 – still working in schools in Far Rockaway and with the Rockaway Men United group. The Assistant D.A. whose time had been paid to “ride” Rockaway cases was, at least as of 2007, continuing his focus on the peninsula, and Rebecca J., hired by QDA to work with Rockaway Weed & Seed, was also still doing so years later.

Oscar M. and I mused over how the people who came to the table had changed over the four years of the PRYSE Initiative. The funded partners were required to attend monthly meetings and most did, with the exception of the Police Department. By

¹²⁷ The theme of paying out of one's own pocket would recur with youth officers, community residents and other adults working closely with youth on funded projects. There was never enough to go around and sometimes although funding was provided for part of an event – say a field trip to a museum or sports match – youth were asked to bring a contribution to cover the costs of lunch or admission. In these cases, adults sponsoring the programs, such as officers from the local precinct, would use their own money to cover for a young person whose family could not or would not pay. In my interview experience, the majority of adults who shared this practice were black and Latino and mostly male (though in the case of the NYPD approximately 17% of the force are women, so the likelihood of running into one of them is lower).

contrast, we have seen that among individuals and groups that were not funded directly through PRYSE, many more people came to the table in the first few months (perhaps as with any new initiative in its period of initial promise and, of course, funding) than would remain four years later. But it must also be noted that some actors stopped coming to meetings because they came to dislike the leadership or key players of PRYSE. Some of the resentments arose because of the dominance of one institution in particular (the Family Health Clinic) within the field of service in Rockaway, in part because the leadership of that organization were white people with advanced degrees.

During our formal interview I asked Oscar M. if he saw any tensions focused on race, class and gender during our work:

I think that's why when we said in the car earlier that maybe some people will return back to the table because [Brenda Z.] is no longer there. I think there's a whole resentment because it was a white/class issue. The notion of a Caucasian woman who was of the Jewish faith, living in Belle Harbor, who is running a program that is affecting black and Latino youth; that's a problem; that's a resentment.¹²⁸ And that's been brought upon those other social service agencies. I'll use quotations, "social service agencies" who are run by black and African Americans but who refuse to partner up because they had their own racial bias. And it's sad because you are affecting children. And they are putting their personal bias before putting in the best interest when they claim that the best interest comes first. And that's evident when you're talking about dealing with [the executive director of the Family Health Clinic]. That's evident. The way in which he speaks to people, maybe other people speak of him, is not very pleasing. There is the class issue.

Oscar M. saw racial tensions on the part of white as well as black leadership. He singled out the executive director of the Family Health Clinic for his reputation of talking like a "reverend," which was sometimes perceived as patronizing. As one of the few

¹²⁸ The Belle Harbor community, site of the crash of American Airlines Flight 587 in November 2001, lies on the Western end of the peninsula. The population is 86% Caucasian and has a median household income of about \$53,000, higher than the median for Queens and for New York State.

Latinos involved in the initiative, Oscar M. also noted that, “We didn’t make enough inroads in the Latino community and again, it goes right back to community organizing. We didn’t do an effective job in organizing the community. We did not do it.”

“Community” can be a slippery term. What if you identify with people who live in Far Rockaway because of your own race, ethnicity or class, regardless of what neighborhood you may live in, or the fact of your professional position? As an example, Oscar M. was a member of the Steering Committee but moved back and forth between being part of the “us” of the community and being part of the “them” of the professionals. This is evident in the way he switches identifications and points of views in the following:

People in the community are now looked upon favorably by members of the Steering Committee simply because some of us may have degrees. Some of us may have much more training and we believe we know what is best for them. And they told us, “No, we know what is best for our kids.” And there is that struggle. We know that. We see it all the time.

Can people who live in the community but lack professional status become full-fledged partners in government-funded efforts at community change? I told Oscar M. that I wondered if community residents had to become “professionals” before their voice would be heard as legitimate within a coalition like PRYSE. At first he couldn’t think of anyone who lived in the neighborhood and was still participating at the end of the initiative. At least two African American women who had started out with strong positions in the Coalition later left, one, Coalition Coordinator Cathy C., because of what was described to me as a “nervous breakdown,” the other because of “family problems.”

We recalled one woman in particular: a young African American with family and roots in Rockaway. As Oscar M. remembered, she had in recent years become very

active because her job allowed her the time to attend meetings (almost all of which took place during the day on weekdays). She took her place as a local at a table where most of the participants did not live in the Rockaways or even work there exclusively. Oscar M. described the reception she faced as follows:

I believe [Pattie] lived in the community before she started working at [Administration for Children's Services]. It was a while before she was working at ACS but even then, nobody would take her seriously. Because there is that mentality that she's just "some girl from the hood" and that's it. She's "looking for a ticket to ride on." That was the mentality.

Of the nine funded partners in PRYSE, only two had primary representatives who lived on the peninsula, only one of whom lived in the Far Rockaway area on which most grant activity focused. Some community members would whisper to me that Brenda Z. lived in the "other Rockaway." Some organizations authorized representatives to come to the meetings because at least some of their services or activities take place in the Rockaways, such as the Queens Borough Public Library, or because they foresaw a possibility for future funding, such as the Rockaway Artists Alliance. "Pattie" was one of those people – her organization saw a clear benefit in having her involved in learning about social services and how to plan for the future. Whether Pattie was initially taken seriously or not, her agency supported her attendance at a variety of local meetings where she was able to learn about upcoming events, attempted to influence the process, and spread information to her own and other groups. Another handful of people participated in PRYSE because they had a vested interest in the Rockaways or in their own advancement among the leadership of the Rockaways.

Professionals and activists engaged in efforts at community change are familiar with the refrain that unless you live in a neighborhood, your legitimacy is questioned.

Someone who doesn't live in the neighborhood cannot possibly understand it, and their motivations cannot be benign; such charges were frequently issued at all sorts of public meetings in Far Rockaway. "You don't live here" was sometimes raised in hostility, sometimes in resentment (albeit rarely in so many words before larger gatherings). As an accusation it points to a deeply-rooted history of exclusion, racism and distrust. The social service providers, including the representatives of law enforcement and criminal justice, reacted poorly to the community perception of them as "outsiders." The professionals showed resentment at community claims to territorial legitimacy and at the perceived lack of appreciation for their efforts.

But things are never as simple as the address where one lives or works. There are moments when professionals can identify with the community and simultaneously acknowledge they do not live in it, *without* losing the conviction that they can "make a difference." I once told Oscar M. that many of the professionals and community residents told me in private that they were frustrated by politicians who attached themselves to PRYSE when it was convenient or when there was a photo opportunity, but who were otherwise not committed to the long-term work that such an initiative requires. Oscar M. replied:

Definitely! Hence my issue. A politician comes around. We had [political candidate Helen J.]. She was around; she was a staunch advocate in the beginning. Buckling herself for chairmanship [here he refers to Helen J. having become a chair of one of the initial committees formed when PRYSE began, only to abandon that post later]. And [then she] lost the election: poof, disappeared. Reverend [Emma F.] came in, advocating for money for York College. "We're going to do this convocation," blah blah. Ran for office, lost the election twice and disappeared. Claims she lives in the community. I don't think so. There are some other people in the community also who claim to do things and no one has ever heard of them, have ever seen any of their programs. And there is just the claim. But it has been their own guilt because they have been here all this time

and have not done anything productive. Now someone else comes in, an outsider... an outsider comes in and does the job. I look at it and it's actually... with the work that I'm doing with [Andre L., Tom H.] and Tito and everyone else for RMU, Rockaway Men United, we are outsiders. None of us live on the peninsula. None of us live on the peninsula. But we come in and our best interest is the young men. What does that say about all the other groups? What does that say about the faith-based organizations?

Most striking about this commentary was his assessment that among people who made claims of working for community change, “it has been their own guilt because they have been here all this time and have not done anything productive.” Guilt proved to be an important force around the table at community meetings, coalition gatherings, and perhaps in the flows of labor and participation around the table.

“How to Sustain People’s Jobs” – Post-Mortem with Cassius C. and Maggie M.

The Rockaway Health Alliance outlasted the PRYSE Coalition, but also ended after its own funding ran out. During an RHA meeting in May 2005, we were discussing how the federal expectation in this health initiative was similar to the expectations faced in PRYSE: The government wanted to see any groups that were funded in coalitions find ways to “leverage” the money they had received and also find ways to sustain the work they had begun. The group at this meeting – which included only funded partners on the project – began talking about PRYSE. The RHA manager, Maggie M., often spoke to me about the difficult position in which we found ourselves. The government expected “measurable outcomes” but the work of some of the groups, particularly Cassius C.’s group, were often far from measurable. Maggie M.’s explanation during this meeting echoed something I heard her say repeatedly: “I’m trying to make the compromise of

pursuing my mission and making it work for the people we are accountable to.” This led to a longer conversation about sustaining the work of a project after the funding ends, and how to demonstrate to the feds that important relationships (between the professionals around the table as well as between these professionals and community residents) had been built when their impact could not be measured very easily, if at all. This led to further reflection about PRYSE and how it had evaporated when Brenda Z. left.

Cassius C. mentioned that he looked back, saw \$9 million, and could not help but think in disappointment, “Where do we see the impact?” We talked about all the money that had come to the area at the time: in addition to the \$8+ million from PRYSE, another \$2.5 million for HCAP, and at least \$68 million in federal funding for the HOPE VI project. (None of the people at the table besides me had been aware of the kind of money going into HOPE VI, and they were shocked by it.) Having considered the weight of all this funding and programming, Cassius C. was speechless for a minute; noteworthy as he was rarely without words. He finally spoke, saying that he could not help but wonder, “Where is the change in the community?” By this time, four years and many conferences, meetings, retreats, jokes and arguments into our relationship, Cassius C. had come to see me as the person who would try to “measure everything” for the reports that would be submitted to the feds; I had done so on PRYSE and was doing the same again for HCAP. After all these years, he explained that he had decided that “Michelle cannot measure us.” He connected my work in Rockaway with so many outsiders, because in the next breath he said: “Outsiders forever coming into your community; you don’t see it coming from the community. It is horrible to see.” Gloria, a representative from the AIDS Center of Queens County, explained that “even the grassroots people don’t want to

live in Rockaway, including people who get Section 8. They look at Rockaway as a dump.”¹²⁹ ACQC had a housing program, and “people don’t want apartments here. Businesses don’t want to come here. Rockaway shuts down at 3 pm. We are not bemoaning it, but these are the facts.”

Sarah W., another Family Health Clinic employee working on HCAP who also lived in the neighborhood, said she thought more of the money that came to the peninsula needed to trickle down to the people whom it was meant to assist. She was also critical of programs in the area that brought grant money to supplement the salaries of people working in the organizations securing the grants. She explained that:

If you know that “so and so” is getting paid \$35,000 and we’re not getting it, it is a lot of money. Say the coordinator in a program gets \$30,000 who doesn’t live here; it is just another salary on top of the salary they are already getting.

This was not meant as an underhanded critique of Maggie M.’s position (though possibly of now-absent Brenda Z.’s), but went counter to Maggie’s claim that in some cases, federal government intervention in the neighborhood was not about the money. Maggie M. used Weed & Seed as an example: it is a strategy, not a grant program. But Sarah W. insisted, regardless, that “it is always about the money.” Maggie M. had to concede, admitting that in partnerships like PRYSE and HCAP (and another SS/HS site in which Maggie had been involved in Nassau County a few years earlier), her own ability to focus on vision-driven priorities had transformed into a responsibility for employing people into the future:

¹²⁹ Here Gloria meant that even people who had public assistance via housing vouchers (Section 8) and could choose to live in an apartment in the neighborhood, should they be able to find a landlord that accepted those vouchers, considered Rockaway a poor choice. Even the incentive of housing assistance could not overcome the perception of Rockaway as “a dump.”

Most of the money goes to keeping organizations afloat. The more time I spend on administration, the less time I spend thinking altruistically and more about how to sustain people's jobs.

Last Words: Tom H., Andre L., Brenda Z.

In looking back on the initiative as a whole during my post-PRYSE interview with him, Tom H., from the mediation group, said there were many things he would have liked “to see happen, but it really [was] a short period of time. The first year is almost a throw-away year.”

If we could continue as a funded entity, we were moving in the direction to be able to leverage increased services to the community. I look at the peninsula, and the services and amenities are not going to service the different communities that are out there. We could have had an impact on that. It's frustrating because we put it together on a whim without having a solid picture of what is needed. Recreational outlets – this was a challenge. Things kids asked for. [Brenda Z.] wanted to have a planning period – she thought we might have spent the money differently if we had done so.

Referring specifically to Jack P.'s critique of PRYSE, Tom H. expressed regrets that:

Community leaders [like Jack P.] felt neglected or locked out. We could have done a better job of building a more solid relationship with them. We should have gone to them instead of waiting for them to come to our doors, especially given what has happened before. Money comes, organizations come, money dries up, and people leave.

What are you accomplishing? From an organizational perspective, we look and say an initiative has intrinsic value. It is also a marketing tool, a good photo opportunity.

In a last interview with Andre L., he emphasized to me (as Oscar M. had also) the encouragement he derived from the continuation of Rockaway Men United, then contrasted a few of the different perspectives that participants had brought to PRYSE:

In the male empowerment program, the first step is the individuals really taking account of themselves before they can participate. Participate is the second or third goal. [First come] yourself, your family, and then the community.

[Cassius C.] sees it in a more theological sense. [Jack P.] sees it on a more local level. He sees it more intellectually, in a more institutional level. The long-term goal is to deal with the Rockaways and New York at the institutional level... Economic planning, the legislative end. The intentions may not always be pure. There has to be flexibility on everyone's part to make it fit together. We cannot only talk about being more concerned with the spiritual, ignoring the economic base, ignoring local factors.

Institutionally, all these things need to be brought to the fore. It is difficult. Community planning, as far as trying to better a community, is hard, hard work. An understatement. You are dealing with every single aspect of someone's life – from the minute when they wake up to when they go to sleep. Everyday life is complicated, wherever you are.

Andre L. recalled starting out in the non-profit sector before joining the public school system:

I left private industry, I worked for a non-profit for kids – the terms I heard there were very touchy, feely. I didn't come from that tradition. I came from cold, hard: "This is what we need to do. Get it done." I had to learn that [new] vocabulary. When I brought in a more structured way, there was push back – we will lose the "warm touchy" if we start to do this as a business. The private sector is guilty of not having the humanity – square peg, square hole.

He held up the Harlem Children's Zone as a successful model for other initiatives, but noted that the initiator of the HCZ, Geoffrey Canada, said himself that:

...it is a very difficult thing to recreate. An incredible amount of money, commitment from organizations that traditionally have not cooperated,

really having the wherewithal to truly canvass every inch, every kid, every school. That is the model. There is a huge amount of public and private money in that effort, too. I spoke about it with [a leadership group] Coro – people are willing to give money, but only to a certain point. When you are talking about these communities – problems don't go away tomorrow. Give millions of dollars for 20 years? Not sustainable. There is not an endless amount of money. A lot of it, people have commitments elsewhere. It's one of the challenges that model faces. But it has to be a marriage of private and public, but public is leading, steering the ship, and the engine is private money.

Andre L. had met Geoffrey Canada through Coro, and acknowledged that the HCZ involved a lot of private money and too little government money. Canada told him government needs to commit more resources:

In order to have resources accessible, so many other things need to change on the top level. We need to change our priorities. We go to war – how many billions of dollars? – and we have no reason to be there in the first place.

I also asked him to reflect on Brenda Z.'s role in PRYSE, which he defended, saying:

The only word of dissension I've heard was [from] Pastor V. There are people who are resentful of PRYSE – people say that it was a lot of money and Brenda played favorites. They also say that all that money didn't reach the population and people were left out of the fold. But I took what the pastor said with a grain of salt. I think it was sour grapes. And I think that sour grapes seems to be the underlying reason that there is sense of tension. It is not only race – but there is a racial component. The families and students that need this help are mostly black, and the person running it wasn't. I've had some exposure to this kind of suspicion.

As Andre L. was the last liaison to the school district involved with PRYSE, I wanted to know how he had been introduced to the Coalition's relationship to the school district.

Ronda: *Did anyone offer perspective on why CSD 27 had not been as involved in the past? Or do you have your own ideas about that?*

Andre L.: *[Brenda Z.] told me when I met her that in the past the district was - for whatever reason - hostile to dealing with anything having to do with the Eastern end of peninsula. The racial and class implications there that are obvious, if not the real underlying factor. I know that the initially level of cooperation was little to nonexistent. That perception has been changed.*

When I interviewed Brenda Z. in November 2004, shortly before she left her position at the Family Health Clinic, she reflected on the separations in communities between the many groups as defined by identity or institution, and the difficulties for initiatives seeking to bring them together as a single community with a unified sense of purpose:

And you're also right that the community, I think, has a way of protecting itself [from] these areas of influence. These areas of identity, and they can be through housing projects, they can be through church groups. Very much through ethnic groups and religious groups, like up in Belle Harbor there's the Jews, the Italians and the Irish. We don't have any common...very few common activities. So they are all done through the churches and synagogues, and that keeps everybody separate. The only common thing is the Little League. That's where you get kids from different....all white kids, but different ethnic backgrounds. That's the only place they really come together. And at the schools, but there's not much there either. So there's very little to pull the community together.

I asked her to reflect on whether she had encountered the concerns that Cassius C. had so often raised: Will this initiative provide lasting change? She said:

You want to look at how you can bring about changes that are visible, and are perceived on various levels. So yes, I've heard that many times, that people have said, "Just another new effort that is going to fall apart when the money goes. What kind of real changes is there? It's not really going to make a difference." That has always been the concern.

So part of what we are talking about is placing value for people to in fact be valued and feel valued within their community. And that goes to some of what we've talked about in terms of attachment and bonding. Because then you feel important, you are important, you have an effect, it's a reciprocal relationship. A dynamic, reciprocal relationship between the individual, individuals, groups of individuals, families, community groups, church groups, tenant associations and the greater community. And that they recognize the interdependence, but the leveraging shifts power and control and decision-making, how decisions are made, who influences decisions. That begins to shift.

So what I think we've tried to do here is to create an opportunity for people to learn the knowledge, the skills, to feel greater attachment to the community. And then to use their emerging positions to shift the balance within the community, so that it helps to strengthen the community. And creates a healthier, an overall healthier community. I think that's the sociological, political, psychological thrust of what we've tried to do.

I asked her to think back with me to the very first public meeting of PRYSE, where the representative from the tenants' organization working with HOPE VI expressed anger at feeling left out of the process. I was curious to know how she interpreted the anger in retrospect, here at the end of the project. Brenda Z. took this anger as a sign of the woman's concern and investment in a community in which the actions of government had served to "really institutionalize poverty":

*Here in Rockaway, what you heard is the voice of anger. And the fact that the woman is attending the meeting tells you that she's not believing what she's saying because she **does** want to make a difference (emphasis hers). And there is, to some extent, a political acknowledgment that government screwed Rockaway. They moved six housing developments into a six-square-mile radius over the period of less than ten years, because of the economic base being changed from a resort area. They created all these nursing homes and SROs and housing for deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients. So this tiny, isolated peninsula was literally dumped on.*

[The mayor of New York City in 1964-1972,] *Lindsey had promised that every New Yorker would have a place to live. Look at where he built most of the housing developments: Coney Island and Rockaway. Everyone had a place to live, but with the fewest resources accessible. The same thing with nursing homes, to keep the economic base they licensed all of these*

hotels to become these deinstitutionalized homes for adults, for psychiatric adults. And didn't build up the infrastructure at the same time. Well, nursing homes provided the biggest employment opportunity, but there's nothing else. So many things came together to really institutionalize poverty here.

*And then you add to that changing in drug use... and the use of crack, in particular. That really hit Rockaway hard. So you had all the right influences to create a very bad situation. So when this woman says to you that "this was done to us, to Rockaway," when she says it's "done to us," there's already some positive there, because of the sense of identity with the community. It wasn't done to **me**, it was done to **us**. That's important. And the fact that she's at a meeting to talk about it is also very important.*

Whereas this answer was all true and important, it seemed to me to deflect from the actual question. Nevertheless, in general, Brenda Z. acknowledged that the failure to bring in the community was a root cause of PRYSE's failure to achieve sustainability:

The other piece is still difficult and that is inclusion and representation. When you go to another agency, you see a lot of community residents without any other kind of stakeholder status, who are there. At this meeting at the PRYSE Coalition, many of them are residents, but they all come in as stakeholders with influence. Just about everybody sitting at that table is part of some other system, some other process. That leaves out people.

Brenda Z. was correct that at some agencies I had visited, community residents didn't seem to have stakeholder status or influence, but that was only in situations where I had visited organizations providing direct service to those residents. In fact, at many of the gatherings I had found myself in over the years on the peninsula, I was struck by how much power and presence filled a room when it was filled by residents, even in the company of other figures we normally associate with power and influence, such as those from the criminal justice system. In the next chapter we begin with a meeting that flew in the face of Brenda Z.'s claim that PRYSE was somehow unique in providing a forum for

residents to wield influence; and even flew in the face of a representative of the US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York.

**One day he's your friend and
next day he's yelling at you to
take off your hat like he don't
know you.**

(Young Rockaway man, 2002)

CHAPTER 6

Policing, Justice and Mediation: Community Strategies, Community Realities

The notion of “the community” is central to the concept of social order as understood by law enforcement, and has come to be seen as the “all-purpose solution to every criminal justice problem” (Garland, 2001, p. 123). In recent decades, as perennial tensions in urban, poor, black and Latino communities simmered and sometimes broke out into uprisings or riots (depending on the observer’s point of view) due to police abuse of authority, racism, discrimination, or use of excessive force; as global and national politics and policy increasingly dismantled the welfare state; and as mandatory minimum sentences for people convicted of drug crimes helped swell the number of those in prison and jail to more than two million people at any given time, the federal government began providing incentives for “community policing” – for placing police in schools to curb school violence; for district attorneys to pursue “community prosecution”; for “community courts” to engage in diversion programs; and for “community access” programs to improve health. A variety of criminal justice institutions – police, prosecutors, courts and, to a lesser degree, corrections agencies – have devoted increasing

attention and funding to a wide array of “community outreach” or “community involvement” programs. And community mediation has grown as a contentious space related to – sometimes within, sometimes outside, sometimes on the margins of – the criminal justice system. The intensification of community policing in the 1990s was also accompanied by an increasing movement toward the establishment of neighborhood-based community courts with real judges and prosecutors volunteering to hear cases that might otherwise involve multiple central courts, or the creation of youth courts in which teenagers judge their peers.¹³⁰ All of these types of initiatives generally exist in “targeted” communities: those without the economic means to sustain their own communities, those said to pose a “risk” or that are “at risk.”

This chapter returns to the three PRYSE partner institutions that constitute or were intimately related to the criminal justice system: the Queens District Attorney’s Office, the New York Police Department, and the non-profit community mediators who sought to offer alternatives to incarceration. Their activities in PRYSE and in other field initiatives in the Rockaways, including Weed & Seed, the Rockaway Truancy Center, and even an initiative of the regional US federal prosecutor, all of which are covered below, are local examples of the far-ranging and broad national trends toward community policing, prosecution, and mediation. But the simultaneous pursuit in recent decades of “community partnerships” and an uncompromising punitive approach would seem to bring inherent conflicts, with offers of partnership in danger of being co-opted by, or of functioning as little more than a friendly-seeming technology of, the hard-line strategies.

¹³⁰ For an example of community justice as implemented in a Brooklyn neighborhood, see the Red Hook Community Justice Center (“What is it?” n.d.). Note that community justice and social justice represent distinct ideologies. There is a way in which the concept of social justice seems outdated in these contexts, in the same way that notions of empowerment have become outdated,

That is one reason such offers frequently meet with apathy or rejection from the residents of targeted communities, as we shall see.

In many cases, the details of partnership offers have already been fully defined and determined by government agencies or even philanthropy before they are ever presented to the potential partners in the community (as was the case with PRYSE). And what if the contents of a proposed partnership are not what the people receiving the offer want in the first place, even if alternatives are short? A further question, of particular interest in recent social science discourse, is to what extent interactions between local organizations or residents and criminal justice agencies occasioned by partnership strategies provide evidence that they serve to *extend* governmental reach or conditioning, or whether, on the contrary, they are *ineffectual* in this regard, regardless of motive or intent? (Or some combination thereof – to anticipate, in this dissertation we have seen and will see real-world examples that support both ideas, to varying degrees.)

We begin with an example of these questions in practice: the story of a meeting I witnessed some years ago that, in my further experience and study of these problems, has come to seem paradigmatic to me of the inherent conundrums in the “community” criminological approach, and for that matter in the “new federalist” rhetoric of federal-local partnership.

“We’re the Feds, So We Can Bring In FBI, DEA and All That”

It is a Friday afternoon in 2004. I have been invited to the Senior Center of the Ocean Bay houses, as the Arverne and Edgemere public housing projects are now known.

but again, social justice and community justice show related but not identical motivations, with differing strategies and tactics for their ultimate achievement.

I am casually dressed, as the Rockaways encourage it – even on this breezy November day, I will make my way to the beach to see the waves. PRYSE is winding down and Brenda Z. will be leaving soon for her new job, precipitating the end of the Coalition, but I don't know that yet. Paul D., the security director from the Queens Borough Public Library, has asked me to attend a meeting at the Senior Center. He knows of my interest in criminal justice, and will soon contract with me for evaluation of the Far Rockaway Weed & Seed. But I also don't know that yet.

I watch as a senior official from the Office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York arrives at the projects in a large, dark sedan, with an entourage in tow of several other men from his office. One of them is their own evaluator. All of them are white men, middle-aged, dressed in highly formal suits. They stand out. You would see from ten blocks away that they aren't from the neighborhood. The US Attorney's representative ranks fourth in the hierarchy of the federal prosecutor's office. Joining his group are two other, older white men, only slightly less formally dressed: a New York police lieutenant, the commander of the housing developments' satellite precinct; and Paul D., who has just embarked upon his tenure as the new site coordinator for the Weed & Seed program in Far Rockaway. The men are having a meeting with members of the recently formed, non-profit Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation (Ocean Bay CDC). In the process of their incorporation, Ocean Bay CDC had worked closely with Paul D., and also with his predecessor as Far Rockaway Weed & Seed manager, P.O. Laura Jane B., the retired NYPD grants officer and former PRYSE partner. (She is not present).

Along with the middle-aged African American woman who leads the Ocean Bay CDC (but who does not live on the peninsula), who I know from my work in Harlem many years back, in attendance today are 14 elderly African American women, most of whom, when they mention it, say they have lived in these projects for almost all of their lives. It is, after all, still the middle of the day, and we are meeting in the Senior Center of the complex. These are the women who have influence in their project; they are the elders, and the project is a world unto itself. As I have learned since I first began working on research projects in the Rockaways, one's identification by housing development is tangible, meaningful and powerful, and has deep roots. In addition, the positions of leadership in tenants' associations, out of which grew the Ocean Bay CDC, and other organized groups from public housing, are almost exclusively African American women (whereas in the wealthier neighborhoods, civic organizations are almost exclusively run by white and/or Jewish men).

The criminal justice officials have come to deliver what they present as excellent news. They have secured a \$600,000 grant for use at Ocean Bay through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and these funds are "to be divided into an enforcement component and a revitalization component, including long-term preventive measures" (John Lenoir, personal communication, November 5, 2004). The US Attorney's high-ranking representative tells the group that the New York Eastern District office and HUD believe it is "critical to get the perspective of people who live here, as well as the crime issues that affect you. We are here to listen and to find out what are your concerns and work that into our strategic plan." He emphasizes that without gathering initial data, they will be unable to measure the later results. Therefore, the US

Attorney wants to figure out the residents' "crime priorities" in order to address these, and to bring down the rate of particular types of crime, so that the reductions can be "displayed on a graph." He needs this group to be as "specific as possible about a crime issue that impacts this place." This will be important in showing whether "confidence," presumably meaning in law enforcement's ability to tackle particular forms of crime, has gone up. He points out that a lot of federal funding "goes out and gets lost and there is no corresponding result." He says that at the end of the funding period the government will ask them, "Did you do any good with the money?" For the U.S. Attorney's office, the goal is to "show that we made an impact, that we defined a problem with your help and that we've made a measurable impact." And so, he explains, he is asking the residents to help determine the issues that should be built into the plan. He asks a final time: "What is that issue that we can build into this plan?"

His question doesn't sound hypothetical to any of the women around the table, who seem to be thinking hard about everything he's said and what he wants to know. But instead of waiting for an answer, a matter to which we now assume he will later return, he introduces the "law enforcement coordinator" from his office. This second speaker, I observe in my field notes, "has the good sense to ask everyone to introduce themselves." Having spent more than my fair share of time in meetings on the peninsula, particularly with many of the matriarchs of the housing developments, I know that politeness matters here. Respect is finely measured; it is racialized and classed; and the perception of its absence or insufficiency can quickly change the tenor of any meeting. Law Enforcement Coordinator (LEC), I would later learn, is a position that has existed in all US Attorneys' offices since 1981, when the Attorney General ordered the creation of a Law

Enforcement Coordinating Committee (LECC) in all districts to enhance the criminal justice system through “federal, state and local law enforcement cooperation” (The Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, n.d., para. 1) in an earlier expression of the partnership ideology.

Introductions complete, the LEC reiterates the presentation of his superior, and repeats that the US Attorney’s office has brought everyone together today for their feedback on “top safety concerns.” He says he would like the group to share those concerns and expand to include information on how a specific crime problem they encounter in the development “impacts you personally.”

For several long moments, an awkward silence fills the room. I note that the room feels “tense.” This is finally broken when Paul D., the library security man, a white, retired New York City policeman in his late 50s, who does not live but often works on the peninsula, speaks up. He has been involved with the CDC long enough to feel a strong sense of ownership, I reckon. But, still, he is careful to preface his remarks by saying that he is speaking as a representative of the Queens Borough Public Library, which has several branches in Rockaway. He says that in his opinion, “weapons, gangs and drugs” are the most pressing problems in the housing development. He calls drugs the “root of all evil.” He asks the women to rank these problems.

Several of the residents now, finally, speak up. They look quite put out by the effort. They say these three issues are interrelated and have less to do with what the police can do about them and more to do with crafting alternatives and opportunities for people of all ages. They also claim that some of the people in management of the development are “in on” the drug dealing, selling crack and marijuana, so there is really

nothing the police can do because the reality will be kept quiet. They tell the officials they want to see more money go into training and community assistance programs. They also say that the federal government should pressure the City housing authority (NYCHA) to prevent the kinds of issues they have seen in their development such as drug dealers taking over empty apartments. They argue that NYCHA will padlock your apartment if you do not pay your rent on time, but will not padlock an apartment known to be empty.

This leads to a disagreement between the women at the table. A few of them and Paul D. talk about public housing residents who do drugs and get arrested, then return to public housing and continue to use or sell or both; they find fault with NYCHA for not taking action, including not replacing light bulbs under scaffolding around the development, which, it is said, were broken by kids, in a tone that implies all kids might be suspected of this destructive behavior. One woman takes issue with this conversation, however; she was the one earlier who had criticized NYCHA for padlocking the apartments of those behind on the rent. She cautioned that “you can’t paint everyone in public housing with the same brush” and encouraged those present to consider that sometimes offenses are committed by people who do not even live in the development, or the neighborhood. She was frustrated that the conversation had so quickly turned negative, pointing out that “even though there are no real after-school programs for kids, you can find money to build a prison.” This prompted another woman to point out that the libraries are not open on the weekend, thereby eliminating one of the positive places youth might spend time outside of school. A conversation ensued about youth having nothing to do, and several women expressed concern that youth might come to the

attention of police for doing nothing other than standing around in their own neighborhood. The police lieutenant offers that people are picked up only when they are doing something illegal. He assures those present as the man in charge that, “if kids are just hanging out in the hallways, it is not fair to them” to have the police approach them without other good cause.

The officer begins discussing what he calls “quality of life issues” as the reason police were able to make 51 gun arrests to date in housing developments on the peninsula. The women in the group don’t seem satisfied with his interpretation, and say that the real problem facing the neighborhood is a lack of activities for youth after school and a lack of employment for adults, especially men. Yet another participant returns to the suggestion from Paul D. that drugs, guns and gangs are the main concerns for people across housing developments on the peninsula, but she does not select one. This leads the LEC to speak up, and repeat his request that the group name the one issue that concerns them the most. Another woman again makes the point that these things are interrelated. She explains, as if the men were visitors from a far-away land, that “people don’t have the ability to get the job. They are intimidated that they can’t get a job and it pushes them back, so instead they hang out.” A CDC member who has not until now spoken asks if the funds can be spent on programs for youth, to find activities for them, to keep them from getting involved in the wrong kinds of activities.

The U.S. Attorney’s representative explains that the funds under the grant are insufficient to create or even sustain programs like that. In any case, the money cannot be used for what he calls “service issues.” Some of it might conceivably go to existing programs, assuming these could already demonstrate success by benchmark.

A woman responds (echoing the words of the Reverend Cassius C. at the end of the PRYSE project in terms of outsiders, but also expressing a view to which I was exposed repeatedly during my work in the lower-income neighborhoods of the Rockaways):

There are so many trainings and things going on, but it is not making the point it should make. People have to feel that they have a part of making a change. It's hard to see people come from outside to repair things where you live. How do you get people to feel like they are part of making a change? How do you make them say "this is my community"? Many things are just not working because they feel no connection. A senior falls in front of a youth, they don't respond. How do we [change] that?

Her comments are compelling and instructive. Recall that the meeting was requested because, and even opened with the explanation that, the US Attorney wanted to get input from the community. But this comment indicates that a request for your input cannot hide recognition of another case of outsiders coming to repair things where you live. This takes the group to a broad discussion about parents as the source of the problem, with some participants criticizing their neighbors as more interested in selling drugs than acquiring legal work. Another disagreement arises, as one member reminds the rest that while these are intergenerational problems, the community must find ways to “include people who are stuck and feel unworthy.”

The U.S. Attorney's official tries to steer the discussion back to crime fighting: “[You're] talking about core issues that are beyond the money we have available... almost service issues.” He now reveals much more about the kind of resources his office can bring to bear, as well as his perspective on the kinds of problems that are appropriate to the grant's attention. He says:

Let's identify the things that are easier fixes... We're the feds, so we can bring in the FBI, DEA and all that. If you can help us identify, for example, with regard to guns: no one here makes them, but they come from some place. Or as another example, is there an organized trafficking route for drugs? The same with guns. No one grows marijuana here, but it comes from somewhere. We can deal with larger organizational aspect of crime. We can work with the NYPD. If you say you have a problem with prostitution: Is it human trafficking? That is where we can make a difference. Again, the same with guns. If there is certain kind of gun coming in, if we get a sense of the source, we can help NYPD with those kinds of resources.

After this attempt to shift the conversation, and with his emphasis on gathering intelligence from the residents, the official receives a prompt rebuff from the head of the Ocean Bay CDC. I was watching her face during his previous comments, and she was slowly realizing that in asking residents to come up with “easier fixes,” he expected them to reveal information about their most troublesome neighbors. She immediately put the onus back on the police by asking:

How can the money be used to address those issues at the precinct? Are you looking for strategies that law enforcement can use to address those issues? No one wants to make himself or herself a target to say, “I know where the guns come from,” even if they did.

Before the official can say a word, another woman, who had also understood the undercurrent of the U.S. Attorney representative’s request, raises an eyebrow so far up that I expect her to fall backward out of her chair. She looks him in the eye, shaking her head from side to side in disapproval while asking, “When was the last time **you** were in the projects?” (emphasis very clearly hers). The room breaks out in laughter. She says that informing the police about guns and drugs could amount to a “death sentence” for the informant.

Paul D. intervenes here and reasons that no one would be able to know or guess who had informed police about who is in possession of weapons. Another woman explains to him that she would be afraid to tell them anything, and that in her view, many police cannot be trusted. She says that sometimes the police will get a call about illegal or suspicious activity and arrive en masse and begin knocking on residents' doors yelling, "Did you call the police about (blank)?" Another CDC member agrees that fear would keep anyone in their right mind from cooperating with police, and adds that instead of asking residents to keep each other accountable, the U.S. Attorney, NYPD and other officials should be "holding NYCHA [the New York City Housing Authority] accountable for safety of tenants." She, the same woman who earlier mentioned that the problems are intergenerational, is visibly angry as she lays the blame for the state of affairs in her development, and also in the neighborhood, on the city and federal governments:

NYCHA allows this stuff to go on. They don't want to get [drugs] out of public housing. It is big business. The more this stays here the worse we look and we stay that way. They had marijuana growing in the tenant association garden. Every couple of months someone comes in and takes our statements and compiles it. But other people are having it just as hard as people in public housing. You bust a house, you board it up. In public housing it is sad, but good, because you can't live anyplace cheaper or nicer than public housing. I think about the City fathers, the Federal government: when you take a prime piece of land like what the Rockaways were and turn it into a no man's land? How many people born and raised here? I've lived here 61 years and watched it change for the worse. Who changed it? The city fathers, New York City made this mess. Fix it and stop asking us to do your job. When are they going to build affordable housing? They decide they need more security now? Where is the security for the last 35 years I've been here?

This eruption has the brass looking for the door. The U.S. Attorney's representative struggles to clarify that the officials have not come "to ask you to do our

business or work for us.” He repeats that they need to draft a strategic plan and formulate measurable benchmarks, and that he is there to invite their input. He explains once again that the U.S. Attorney’s Office can “bring in surveillance and undercover officers.” He assures the Ocean Bay CDC that his office will “sit down and talk to” the police, as well as “get all the data from NYPD.” Although he has not mentioned it previously, he now also assures the group that he has to “go talk to NYCHA, but it might be good to do that separately as part of our strategy development.”

Finally, he returns to the fact that the funding secured through HUD is conditional:

We need to show we are making a difference or we made an impact. And if we do that, we are primed for additional funding. We want to show Congress we got a good bang for this money. It is an investment. We ask that you identify a problem that we can fix.

The officials leave the room and, to my knowledge, never meet with the Ocean Bay CDC again. What stands out about the meeting in retrospect is that the federal prosecutorial representatives had arrived with one hammer, that of the expanded criminal investigations for which they had received budgeting, and so every problem was going to look like a nail. The residents were asked about their needs or worries, but the feds were only prepared to hear one answer, and nothing about the “service issues” that by far most of the residents believed were relevant to the problems the feds said they wanted to help solve. The feds’ invitation to partnership and offer to let the residents participate in shaping how the money would be spent rang hollow; the broad means of the proposal were always and already defined (more criminal investigations), and the input of the residents desired insofar as it could assist the proposed criminal justice mission with

information, or help in crafting measurable outcomes (almost certainly in the form of rising arrest numbers) that might impress enough to get more funding in the next budget. It is no wonder that the residents were not interested in taking up this offer, also given the risks it entailed to them personally, which the federal representatives did not seem to fully appreciate. Despite a few expressions of appreciation for the police and even the benefits that strategies like Weed & Seed had brought to the neighborhood, in the end the Ocean Bay CDC group did not elect to choose a single crime issue on which the US Attorney's office could bring to bear its full arsenal of strategy. On the other hand, the US Attorney may have implemented the strategy elsewhere, with just nominal participation from a more amenable group, the Rockaways not lacking in criminal justice approaches to the structural problems its neighborhoods face.

This story is more paradigm than exception, but it does lie toward one extreme. The issues are not always as clear-cut. Community prosecution and community policing as practiced on the local level in Queens and elsewhere in New York City, which has been a leader in the national trends toward such practices, can be far more ambiguous; a matter to which we now turn.

Community Prosecution – “Take One, Call It a Victory”

The Queens District Attorney represents Queens County in the prosecution of people arrested by law enforcement under suspicion of crimes committed in the borough; in the criminal justice system, the prosecutor is the link between police and courts. The Queens County District Attorney's Office (QDA) is organized into several divisions, for example “Major Crimes and Investigations” and “Special Prosecutions.” The Special

Prosecutions Division is headed by an Executive Assistant D.A. and oversees the activities of QDA's community programs. The current District Attorney, Richard Brown, created this division after first taking office in 1991 "to build strong community partnerships, tackle quality of life issues, and spearhead his crime prevention and mentoring programs" (Sligh, 2006, para. 2).

The establishment of Special Prosecutions represented QDA's early entry into community prosecution, a trend with roots in the 1980s (corresponding with the birth of community policing) that became increasingly widespread in the mid-1990s. In 1993, a national focus group was convened to define the concept of community prosecution, with funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the US Department of Justice. The group was led by the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) and in 1995 advanced the following definition:

Community prosecution *focuses on targeted areas* and involves a long-term proactive partnership among the prosecutor's office, law enforcement, the community and public and private organizations, whereby the authority of the prosecutor's office is used to solve problems, improve public safety and enhance the quality of life in the community (Weinstein, 1998, p. 20, emphasis mine).

APRI sees this philosophy and strategy emerging "as a response to the drug crisis" (American Prosecutors Research Institute, n.d., p. 1). Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes was among the first prosecutors in the country to implement community-based programs that were later followed as models nationwide. One program by the Brooklyn prosecutor, "Legal Lives," brings D.A. staff into the classrooms of fifth graders and included mock trials and a radio show (Kings County District Attorney's Office, n.d.). Every borough in New York City now has some version of community

prosecution with prosecutors involved in drug courts, truancy centers, classrooms and neighborhood meetings. The community prosecution ideology, similar to community policing, embraces the language and intention of prevention. In a March 1999 hearing before the House of Representatives, the Queens Executive Assistant D.A. managing the QDA community programs in Rockaway explained that his office had taken up community prosecution because prosecutors “must play a critical role in preventing crime by reaching out to our young people,” which includes providing and advocating for employment opportunities and educational experiences (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, 1999).

Between FY 2000 and 2006, the federal government spent \$256 million funding community prosecution projects around the country. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice was second only to the American Prosecutors Research Association in the amount of money received during this time (about \$5.5 million). The sum may not sound like much, but it helps to provide prosecutors with powerful access to communities and their institutions, especially when they use it to subsidize the salaries of D.A. personnel who engage through the schools, which at no additional cost already provide highly organized environments and large, effectively captive target populations.

At the March 1999 Congressional hearings on reauthorizing the Juvenile Justice Act, the QDA’s representative began his testimony with something like an admission:

I cannot present to this body this morning any hard-core data that 2,250 children in our programs have made a decision that changed their lives because they've been involved or impacted upon by the STAR Track program, the Second Chance program, our internship program, or even Operation Summer Fun, or that any number who are at risk to become juvenile delinquents had their lives changed because of the contact with

*any of our programs.*¹³¹ *But I can tell you when people ask me how we judge these programs, I tell them “one, two or three children at a time. I’m happy to take one and call it a victory.”*

STAR Track was among the pre-existing or off-the-shelf programs that were integrated into the PRYSE project and received SS/HS funding. As with the others, concrete measures of its success are elusive. The idea of “take one and call it a victory” seems to serve as a common substitute for the missing data and the ever-present pressure to produce measurable outcomes in comprehensive community initiatives. Although the federal government is highly invested in accountability via standardized evaluation methods, this is undermined by the ease with which data showing few meaningful impacts or even lone anecdotes can be touted, at least by those with the standing to do so. The quote reveals the QDA rep being *upfront* about the lack of measurable outcomes, arguing to the House that *perceiving* a positive influence in even one child is worth the money he was asking them to spend. In this case, the D.A.’s institutional position, the respect or even awe that are assigned to it, and his personal reputation are sufficient to assure that money continues to be allocated regardless. Not all requirements for “hard data” are equally rigid.

The QDA representative’s House testimony presaged the types of data that eventually were provided to evaluators by PRYSE initiative participants, whenever it was time to submit formal evaluations to the federal government. PRYSE could always show

¹³¹ According to an interview (The DA Does 30, 1999) with Richard Brown, the Queens District Attorney, the “Second Chance” program “offers an additional alternative sentencing program to defendants convicted of such minor, non-violent crimes... Defendants convicted of these crimes perform community service at various sites in the borough, under the supervision of community and local agencies. The work they perform, such as removing graffiti from highways and cleaning up parks, courthouse holding pens, and subway stations, directly benefits the community. Those who do not perform the community service are re-sentenced as required.”

that many hundreds or even thousands of children participated in a funded program, but had little data to measure substantive impact. As we have seen this was due both to the resistance of participants to gather data that would concretely demonstrate how their programs impacted local residents, and to the crafting of the original evaluation plan; as well as the inherent difficulties in defining and measuring often intangible qualities. (We will return to this in Chapter 8.)

The National Center for Community Prosecution (NCCP) – a partnership of the APRI think tank and the Bureau of Justice Assistance – has written many briefs and reports as part of its mission to develop and promote community prosecution initiatives. NCCP is also upfront about the fact that the benefits of the community prosecution model are elusive. Some of their publications raise the very questions that people in the affected communities have also begun asking of these programs, such as: How does one measure empowerment in a community? How do we measure crimes which were *deterred* by the activities of a district attorney’s office? In the absence of obvious “benchmarks of success,” as one NCCP author wrote, both the motivations and demonstrable results of community prosecution are questionable, and may be more about self-aggrandizement than community spirit:

The absence of benchmarks of success leads to a final ethical issue related to community prosecution—it is potentially a political ploy and not a public service function. (Kuykendall, 2004, p. 14).

Given this reality, where are the substantive procedures for dealing with potential conflicts between community work and criminal prosecution? In classrooms visited by D.A. staff doing an approximation of social work, the children of those who sell illegal substances sit next to the children of parents with legally sanctioned forms of

employment. When District Attorneys, and their staff, have regular and intimate access to these youth, many layers of ethical tension arise; while working to improve the community, they may also be engaging in prosecutorial surveillance. Won't some of the children familiarized to law enforcement in this fashion also begin to view each other, and the adults around them, with a similar suspicion? Worse, do these community programs with the intent of preventing entry into the criminal justice system backfire by actually "widening the net" of criminal justice to detect and encompass youth who might never have been involved in the criminal justice system otherwise?

Community Policing – Top-Down by Another Name?

The history of policing in the United States has gone through several stages since the Tammany days of political favoritism and semi-private protection rackets, when ward bosses doled out police jobs to supporters. The cutting edge in the contemporary landscape is not simply of community policing, but community policing as influenced by neoliberal ideology and its "customer service" ethos.¹³² As a trend within law enforcement, the roots of "community policing" grew alongside an increase in professionalism among US police, in a climate of racial hostility and violence in the 1960s. At its core community policing has an intention toward partnership, at least in rhetoric if not always in practice, and is counterposed to the "old days" when policing supposedly did not build community relationships or have an obligation of accountability to neighborhood residents. Community policing initiatives may have specific stated

¹³² This conclusion is based on the definition of community policing provided by the U.S. Department of Justice: "...a policing philosophy that promotes and supports organizational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police-community partnerships" (US Department of Justice, What Is Community Policing?, 2003).

missions, for example to improve the safety of police officers at work, or they may be defined more broadly in terms such as “reducing social disorder.” But all of these programs share one remarkably consistent goal: to encourage *positive* relationships with law enforcement. Community partnerships are seen as a way to prevent crime, reduce citizens’ fear of crime, as well as reduce youth entry into the criminal justice system. The assumption is widespread that even simple exposure of community residents to police in a friendly atmosphere will foster understanding of police work, and thus sympathy and greater cooperation among average citizens, leading to improved police safety. The evidence is mixed.

New York City has often led the way in espousing policing strategies later embraced across the nation. Strategies adopted and celebrated as highly successful in New York since the early 1990s originated in theories emphasizing “quality of life” and the now well-known “broken windows” idea that links neighborhood neglect with crime (see Wilson & Kelling, 1982, for the first introduction to their argument). At the same time, the New York City Police Department has also been a global pathbreaker in the use of technology, including the practice of crime mapping or locating the geographical “hot spots” of criminal activity, of which the CompStat program has become the best-known trademark (and is also considered a strategic management practice or strategic control system; for a detailed treatment of CompStat, see Walsh & Vito, 2004).

The NYPD first prominently embraced and advocated the tenets of community policing under Police Commissioner William Bratton from 1994 to 1996. He went on to become chief of the Los Angeles Police Department from 2002 to 2009, and then began work with an international “risk consulting” company in New York City. The current

mission of the NYPD, developed during Bratton's tenure, emphasizes the notion of police and citizens cooperating in the cause of a better life:

[T]o enhance the quality of life in our City by working in partnership with the community and in accordance with constitutional rights to enforce the laws, preserve the peace, reduce fear, and provide for a safe environment (City of New York Police Department, 2010:2, "About NYPD: Mission and Values," para. 1).

The NYPD's "statement of values" (as of 2010) also gives a featured role to citizens by pledging "in partnership with the community" to:

- Protect the lives and property of our fellow citizens and impartially enforce the law.
- Fight crime both by preventing it and by aggressively pursuing violators of the law.
- Maintain a higher standard of integrity than is generally expected of others because so much is expected of us.
- Value human life, respect the dignity of each individual and render our services with courtesy and civility ("About NYPD: Mission and Values," 2010, para. 2).

While criminologists and law enforcement specialists maintain a common-sense consensus that strengthened social order and closer ties of law enforcement to the community serve to prevent and reduce crime, a number of criminologists regarded highly in law enforcement circles doubt the extent to which community policing policies in New York and elsewhere go beyond the promises (or slogans) of a top-down pronouncement from a centralized authority. As Forman (2004) notes:

Many police programs that call themselves community policing do not systematically involve community residents in the process of establishing policing priorities and tactics (p. 8).

Perhaps the most important contradiction arises insofar as law enforcement or criminal justice agencies adopt methods of engaging communities that *automatically*

assume criminal justice solutions to crime. Forman emphasizes the need for, and the lack of, real community input. But as the story told above of the meeting with the Ocean Bay CDC illustrates, to ask communities about their priorities when the field of solutions is proscribed in advance can occasion resentment, hostility and resistance. What Forman's analysis may underemphasize is the reality of the power relationships – the race-, class-, and gender-related tensions – present in police-community interactions. But also, the interpersonal influence between criminal justice system representatives and those who might resist them are incomplete on both sides – can communities really influence police authority on the ground through the means of an invitation to partnership? The women from the Ocean Bay CDC refused to select a single concern that would allow the US Attorney's office to define it, measure it, intervene and later present impacts; and in so doing may have lost access to money that could have been put to some relevant community use. But they also rejected a purely law-enforcement approach to problems they saw as existing outside that frame.

Community Mediation and State Intervention: Governmentality or Possibilities for Informal Justice?

To complete our outline, let us consider mediation as a related third “community” trend in the realm of law, crime and punishment. Community mediation began as one part of the larger movement now known in academic and policy circles as “restorative justice,” again, as distinguished from retributive justice. Community mediation arose in the US “in the late 1970s as an alternative to a formalized justice system that was perceived to be costly, time consuming, and unresponsive to individual and community needs” (Coy & Hedeem, 2005, p. 405). Today, the US-based National Association for

Community Mediation (NACM) claims 300 member organizations (National Association for Community Mediation, n.d.). According to NACM figures from 2003, community mediation programs handle approximately 100,000 conflicts per year, “principally using trained volunteers” (Gazley, Chang & Bingham, 2006, p. 844).

Although community mediation programs may rely on trained mediator volunteers, and grew out of an ideology of community and individual empowerment, Coy & Hedeem (2005) argue that “community mediation has become increasingly institutionalized and has undergone various degrees of co-optation in its evolving relationship with the court system” (p. 405). Co-optation, in this view, becomes possible when power imbalances and the presence of threat appear between groups. Challenger movements that choose to institutionalize find benefits, particularly “opportunities to effect some progressive policy changes,” but also face co-optation and demobilization (Piven and Cloward, 1971 as cited in Coy and Hedeem, 2005, p. 407). In this context, empirical research on challenger movements from abortion clinics to community mediation centers document numerous “social control dangers,” including funding requirements of the state that alter the missions of challenger organizations and displacement of more radical movement participants in favor of more centrist participants (Coy & Hedeem, 2005, p. 407).

A recent study found that community mediation organizations asked to reflect on interorganizational relations report the strongest linkages with the courts (Gazley, Chang & Bingham, 2006). Despite this evidence of institutionalization, the informality of community mediation remains highly appealing across the political spectrum due to its possibility of empowerment as affected parties “take control of the resolution process,”

continuing to emphasize grass-roots approaches as an ideal, as well as for cost savings to the state (Mulcahy, 2000, p. 136). Scholars of mediation actually see three analytically distinct projects within community mediation: the delivery of dispute resolution services; social transformation; and personal growth (e.g., Harrington & Merry, 1988, p. 710). But this is an idealized view. In practice today, mediation tends to favor professionals who have mastered the fine art of promoting neutrality, and so mediators with close community ties are marginalized (a trend already set as far back as Harrington & Merry, 1988).

The debate over the rhetoric and realities of “community,” therefore, extends to community mediation. Does mediation promote, along the lines of community justice ideals, a revitalization of community and therefore of democracy by “nurturing individual freedom,” or does mediation increasingly “expand and intensify state control” (Pavlich, 1996, p. 711)? Brigg (2007) writes that “governmentality analysis offers a nuanced critique of informal western conflict resolution by arguing that recently emerged ‘alternatives’ to adversarial court processes both govern subjects and help to *constitute* rather than challenge formal regulation” (p. 27, emphasis mine). In describing this critique, he argues “that mediation and other so-called alternatives to adversarial court processes involve a ‘governmentalization’ of the state, or the increasing involvement of individuals in the exercise of formal (sovereign) power through informal means” (Foucault, 1997a as cited in Brigg, 2007, p. 28). Here we find the paradox of “freedom” so well-noted by such critics: as subjects discipline themselves, seemingly embracing a refreshing autonomization, the behaviors they generate advance the goals of the “(neo-) liberal state” (p. 28). Pavlich (1996) argues that this question is an oversimplification, as

early views on governmentality tended to be. The bifurcation between mediation as either limiting or expanding state control over dispute resolution is misleading (Pavlich, 1996), and furthermore, specifying “state control” with precision is much more difficult than either side of this debate reveals.

In overcoming oversimplification, Pavlich (1996) envisions “community mediation as a contemporary instance of a governmental rationality that involves not only *techniques of discipline* but also *techniques of self*” (emphasis in original, p. 714). He analyzes actual mediation sessions to articulate those techniques. Much of Pavlich’s work is detailed beyond the scope of this dissertation’s consideration of community mediation for the institutional role it played in the PRYSE Coalition. However, Pavlich’s insight that one aspect of the mediation process is sometimes to modify one’s self-concept or self-identity in ways that might fundamentally compromise deeply-held attachments to our purposes, our telos, is instructive. The line of inquiry most compelling for research on comprehensive community initiatives is “the focus on techniques of self (which) elaborates on the governmental rationality of community mediation.” In this line of inquiry, community mediation is just one form of many in a context of neoliberal governance seeking “to shape particular kinds of self-identities” (p. 727). Pavlich concludes that just as the mediation session he analyzed did not resolve as the mediators had intended, all types of “governing at a distance” (what Pavlich calls “remote control”) are unpredictable – in fact, in his view, the potential of the state to regulate individuals is only achieved knowing that predictability of outcome is uncertain (p. 728). In other words, “community mediation is thus never a simple expansion of state control” (p. 728).

In another view on the limits and potentials of community mediation either to become an extension of, or remain some challenge or alternative to the state, Mulcahy's (2000) fieldwork shadowing community mediators who live and work in disadvantaged communities revealed that through active diversion, those mediators sought to and *succeeded* in deflecting "cases from the gaze of formal institutions" (p. 149). This corresponds with my findings that even Youth Officers and the District Attorney's people made referrals to informal organizations, including youth court and particularly mediation, intending to divert people – especially young people – *away* from the criminal justice system. But what happens when mediators, particularly professional mediators, and criminal justice system workers find themselves in close quarters, as within CCIs in general and PRYSE in particular, and also with access to a general population in a structured environment, as in the schools? The danger of a widened net (as opposed to diversion of the vulnerable from formal justice) again looms, as in the example in Chapter 4, when CMO identified the most vulnerable students at a school for intervention. Such an early warning system possibly raises their odds not only of diversion from, but (without intending to) of entry to the formal justice system; but this is damnably hard to measure beyond the hypotheticals and counterfactuals of asking, what if they hadn't done that?

Again, moving beyond oversimplification, Brigg (2007) also considers the possibilities of "resistance to governance in conflict resolution," not referring only to straightforward non-compliance in mediation, as "governance accommodates partial failure within its operations," but instead seeking "non-regulatory possibilities within conflict resolution" (p. 29). Brigg seeks ways to complicate our views on order and

dispute. To analyze power relations in “affective interpersonal relations,” Brigg supplements Foucauldian analysis with Emmanuel Levinas’s insights on intersubjectivity. Although Brigg emphasizes that the approach used is not typically empirical, being closely focused on the microinteraction of mediation sessions using autoethnographic method, his analyses are useful here. He articulates, as a trained mediator, the posture of white western mediators’ “expectations that selves should be peaceful rather than combative, rational rather than emotional, self rather than otherwise oriented, and focused on the task at hand rather than wider issues” (p. 40). In the end he concludes that “forces other than those of western liberalism (with its accompanying assumptions about selves, order and dispute) might come to operate through informal conflict resolution practice” (p. 44). This process may happen through attention to the centrality of what Brigg calls “affect and susceptibility” (mediation requiring significant interpersonal, hence affective, exchange, as well as an emphasis on relationality that he borrows from Levinas and calls a “susceptible sensibility”). Brigg argues this does not necessarily require the agency of individual mediators but rather a training and education that create the opportunity for mediators to find themselves in situations where mainstream views will be challenged by the parties of mediation. Although his work was with Australian Aboriginal groups, and so quite far afield from the groups that were working in the Rockaways, the analysis better informs the view that the danger of governing at a distance may be mitigated, not only through the *failure* of purported “remote control” means like mediation to work, but also through the *reshaping* of mediation by claims made of groups with whom mediators work.

Policy Realities in a “Target Community”

The announced goal of community policing is to raise the “quality of life” of citizens, supplanting the classical view of police officers as a quasi-independent force of law enforcers and crime fighters. Simultaneously, a lucrative global industry has arisen from crime deterrence strategies grounded in the theory of “rational choice,” which posits lawbreakers who act only after weighing the costs and benefits of their behavior, and which suspends all attention to social stratification. Rational choice theory follows classical criminology insofar as it assumes that the threat of punishment leads people to choose not to engage in crime. However, it moves away from the concept of punishment proportionate to the crime. One rational choice model, “specific deterrence,” advocates meting out harsh punishment for people convicted of even minor crimes, arguing that severe sanctions ensure a lower rate of repeat offenses; whether or not this is deterrence, one may doubt if it is justice. Note well that these theories may superficially argue that they might be applied to all manner of crimes; but in implementation their prescriptions generally are reserved for “street crimes,” not “suite crimes.” In any case, specific deterrence harks back to the “broken windows” idea; thus, when Giuliani was mayor of New York City, he took on the “squeegee men” as key in his quality-of-life policing agenda.

The consensus of criminological research, however, is that “neither perceived severity of punishment nor perceived certainty” (the twin pillars of deterrence theory) offer evidence of deterring criminality (Barkan, 2009, p. 519). In some instances, harsh sanctions have also provoked defiance instead of deterrence. Given that apprehension and punishment have had little effect on chronic offenders, more than ever U.S. public

policy now focuses on incapacitation rather than the long-forgotten ideal of rehabilitation. The problem with this approach is that policies such as mandatory sentencing for violent or drug-related crimes and “three strikes” policies are neither confirmed to reduce the crime rate, nor necessarily to incarcerate the very small percentage of people who commit the most crimes. In addition, mandatory sentencing and the so-called War on Drugs have contributed to the serious crowding problems facing prisons and jails today – to the point where some states have begun to mandate the release of non-violent offenders. And the war against drugs is racially discriminatory, with disproportionate impact on African American males in particular (Barkan, 2009, p, 517).

With over seven million people under some sort of correctional control in 2005, and over two million people directly incarcerated, approximately 600,000 people are released from U.S. prisons each year. In the process called “re-entry,” persons released from prison often return to live in the neighborhoods they left when they were arrested. This was certainly the case in the neighborhoods on the eastern end of the Rockaway peninsula. During the PRYSE neighborhood surveys (reviewed in Chapter 2), I commissioned two maps to confirm the intuition and anecdotal evidence that many of the peninsula’s young black men, in particular, were negatively involved with the criminal justice system, and that many of those admitted to jail or on probation lived in public housing.

The first map made for PRYSE (Figure 6.1) shows the number of jail admissions from 2002, with an overlay of the density of public housing. The accompanying table shows that the Rockaway peninsula had a slightly higher percentage of its population admitted to jail (1.52%) than the borough of Queens (.62%) and New York City overall

(1.34%) in 2002. The second map (Figure 6.2) shows numbers of probationers on the peninsula, with a comparison for Queens and New York City as a whole. I chose probationers as I knew the number of juveniles being detained for probation violations had increased by nearly 90% by 2002 from the early 1990s (more youth were also being detained for misdemeanors versus felonies) and also to see how many people had received this alternative to incarceration (or detention).

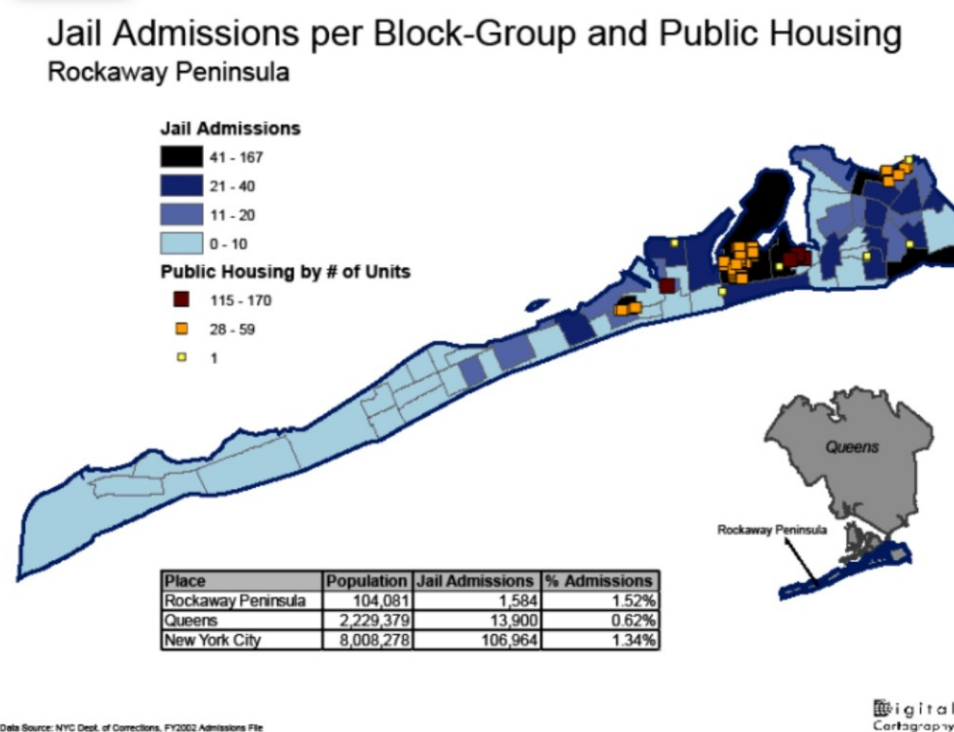


Figure 6.1: Jail Admissions Per Block-Group and Public Housing, Rockaway Peninsula, 2002 (PRYSE).

Probationers per Block-Group Rockaway Peninsula

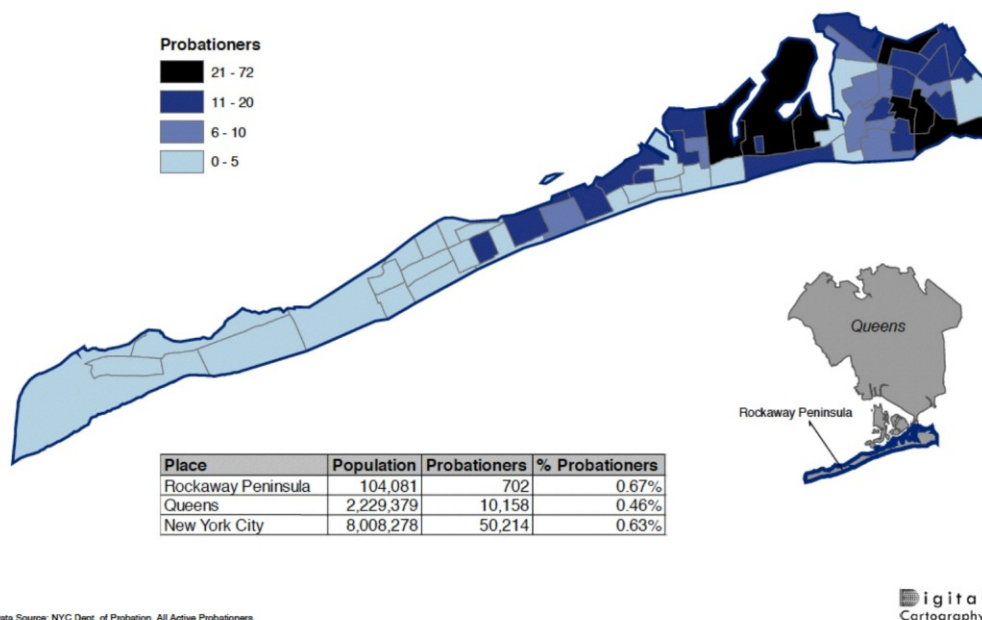


Figure 6.2: Probationers per Block-Group, Rockaway Peninsula, 2002 (PRYSE).

The concentration of people already under criminal justice system supervision in a neighborhood tells us about needs in that community. For example, access to employment upon release is one important factor in desistance from crime. Unfortunately, funding for reentry programs fails to meet demand, thus perpetuating the phenomenon of the prison revolving door. Community policing – and other efforts that prioritize partnership with non-law enforcement people – are in theory meant to address these criminal justice consequences before the cycle begins. In the case of those on probation, the intention is to avoid an escalation of formal social control, but without access to employment, education and training, finding employment for those on probation is also quite difficult.

The community can provide support, but access to employment requires resources beyond the rhetoric of community justice and becomes a question of social justice. In addition, however, there are a significant group of people for whom self-sufficiency may be impossible. The women at the Ocean Bay CDC table made clear that they were more than familiar with not just youth, but many adults, especially “grown men” for whom employment was, literally and figuratively, unthinkable. In the later work with the HCAP-funded Rockaway Health Alliance, we also learned that while the goals were to improve access to health care, the non-profits partnered in the RHA found that *hunger* was actually the bigger problem facing the community residents they encountered. In other words, the realities of poverty were everywhere under our noses, but our efforts were not directly addressing them, despite their insistence. The people who cycle in and out of prison are much more likely to find self-sufficiency a remote goal. In spite of these realities, poverty is not directly addressed; instead the community justice trend has been intensified alongside the “zero tolerance” approach, with greater impetus given to partnership/community strategies on the federal level since the passage in October 1994 of the Public Safety Partnership and Community Policing Act and the creation of the Justice Department’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS, also a partner in SS/HS, as we saw in Chapter 1).

As the age at which children are tried as adults has dropped; as criminal justice, penal and law enforcement policies became increasingly rationalized, though punitive rather than corrective; and as a familiar rhetoric of order over liberty seized the day, law enforcement officials also increasingly came to work directly inside public schools

(Dohrn, 2001, 95; Beger, 2002).¹³³ This brought money to police departments for more intensive partnering with schools, seeking to prevent delinquency. The “COPS in Schools” program, introduced by COPS in April 1999, provided funding for “2,300 law enforcement agencies” to hire (by May 2002) “over 4,900 School Resource Officers” to “engage in community policing in and around primary and secondary schools” (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, n.d.-b, para. 3). In New York City, the agents of the School Safety Division in 1998 became employees of the NYPD, answerable not to school administrators but to the local police precinct; supervision of the \$70 million-plus division was transferred from the Board of Education, which had come widely to be viewed as incompetent in maintaining security (see Chapter 7, “Excursus”).

Public space within public schools is now more charged with the threat and actuality of legal retribution. Certainly police entered schools in the past, but the trigger for intervention is no longer as sharply defined by outrageous, highly violent behavior, because more law enforcement professionals are already routinely present in and around school buildings. In addition to increases in police and school resource officers within schools, most states have begun using adult criminal sanctions against youth previously classified as juvenile offenders. Torbet et al. (2000) found that sentencing reforms have a consistently disproportionate impact on African American and Latino males, without compelling evidence that the reforms – which amount to harsher punishment for younger people – have actually decreased rates of juvenile offending.

When enforcement of the law, previously excluded from the protected space inside the public school, moves inside the school walls, the nature of “public” is

¹³³ Despite the fact that rising violence among youth in the mid 1990’s was “highly concentrated in just 5 U.S. cities,” law enforcement presence exists in rural, suburban and urban schools (Sullivan, 2001, 5).

transformed. Indeed the nature of the subject itself (in a sociological sense) may be transformed.

Legal retribution, put in place in lieu of failing moral suasion, is more easily facilitated by the intimate insertion of police into the spaces where mostly youth of color and of the lower economic margin spend a large portion of their waking hours (Aronowitz, 2000, p. 223).

These sweeping policy issues were rarely discussed at PRYSE meetings. The spaces that saw a more intensive debate over consequences of the work of PRYSE were the committees that had been formed to concentrate on the Safe Schools/Healthy Students' goals embedded in the Coalition. Other community gatherings, like the meeting in the Ocean Bay senior center with which we opened this chapter, or the Weed & Seed meetings, included more obviously adversarial engagement over community, its meanings and consequences, especially as related to the criminal justice system; perhaps in part because more community residents were present. Weed & Seed, in particular, is worthy of more attention as it helped socialize a generation of low-income community residents to the logic of criminal justice strategy.

Weed & Seed

The Weed & Seed anti-drug, anti-crime strategy was launched by the senior Bush administration and initiated by the Department of Justice in 1991. NYPD implemented it on the Rockaway peninsula in the 1990s. The program expired in December 2010 and will no longer be funded. Promotional material described it as follows:

Weed and Seed is foremost a strategy – rather than a grant program – that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in designated high-crime neighborhoods across the country. The more than 250 Weed and Seed sites range in size from several

neighborhood blocks to several square miles, with populations ranging from 3,000 to 50,000 (Weed and Seed, n.d.).¹³⁴

Weed & Seed was considered a two-pronged approach: law enforcement agencies and prosecutors cooperated in “weeding out” specific individual criminals who participated in violent crime and drug abuse, attempting to prevent their return to a targeted area; this happened under the supervision of regional US Attorney’s offices. The second prong, “seeding,” was to bring human services to the targeted area, encompassing prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood revitalization. Weed & Seed sites across the nation ranged up to 15 square miles in size. Community policing was a critical component of the strategy, described as having “officers obtain helpful information from area residents for weeding efforts while they aid residents in obtaining information about community revitalization and seeding resources” (US Department of Justice, n.d.).

Weed & Seed was administered through the federal Community Capacity Development Office of the Office of Justice Programs (DoJ). The strategy was supposed to improve safety, decrease incidents of violence, create opportunities for children, secure health care access for residents, help people find sufficient employment, educate and build political will. Although it was described as “a community-based strategy,” at the site where I worked, the by-laws did not require that residents or representatives of the neighborhood non-profits be included in the executive committee, which made all decisions on hiring, finances and whether to authorize or review grant applications.

Though it was never made explicit at public meetings of the Rockaway group, Weed & Seed put law enforcement, district attorneys and US Attorneys in targeted

¹³⁴ Previously the Department of Justice description of Weed and Seed referred to the neighborhoods in which it is implemented as “targeted” rather than “designated.”

locations **to gather information**. People in targeted neighborhoods are by now familiar with enhanced surveillance, and conflicted about it because of the frequent crime with which they live. The tension felt by residents over the intervention of the criminal justice system in neighborhoods with higher street-crime rates – and the ways in which those interventions are perceived as opportunistic and therefore disingenuous – became clearer during the Weed & Seed meetings designed to announce those interventions.

In an interview with a social science consultant who worked in Rockaway for several years – a Latina who had expertise in urban planning in low-income and minority areas – she related her belief that anyone taking part in partnerships with law enforcement and criminal justice can easily run into difficulty when they offer criticism of the institutions, practices or staff. In reflecting on her experience as a researcher hired to help evaluate Weed & Seed in Far Rockaway, she said the project saw great tension between local residents and representatives of advocacy groups such as the NAACP, on the one hand, and the project's on-site coordinator, on the other. She did not view tension per se as problematic, as she understood tension to hold the potential for change. But this animosity appeared to her as a struggle for personal power and authority as well as for determining the project's direction. The site coordinator at the time was the aforementioned security director of the Queens Borough Public Library and former NYPD officer, Paul D. The executive committee of the Far Rockaway Weed & Seed program included representatives of the US Attorney's Office and the Queens District Attorney.

The consultant said she had determined that the Rockaway Weed & Seed executive committee's decision-making process, particularly in the allocation of money

to project partners, was in conflict with the organization's by-laws. After a series of tense meetings the community residents on the steering committee pressed successfully to replace Paul D. and appoint the local NAACP representative as the new site coordinator. Shortly after his election, the consultant presented him with her findings relating to the by-laws. This infuriated Paul D. as the deposed site coordinator, as well as the representatives from QDA and the Police Athletic League. After that, none of those who had been angered by the woman's comments ever **even acknowledged** her in a meeting again, except in the most antagonistic ways. She was snubbed in obvious ways – not saying hello to her when greeting others in the room, not acknowledging comments she made in meetings – but also in more serious ways, such as telling her she would never work in Rockaway again. When the consultant later applied for a job at the Queens Borough Public Library – for a position having nothing to do with the security director's office – she feared that her chances would be ruined by the negative impressions of her from her time with Weed & Seed. She looked beyond her own role to include anyone working or living in areas lacking political clout:

This is all about the fear in poor communities and who is manipulated by that fear and who has the power to manipulate it. It is so easy to get on the radar of powerful people like the police or District Attorney's Office. And jobs are all about politics and that's why poor people don't have jobs.

The consultant believed – and others working on the project concurred – that the people who held the most power and influence in Weed & Seed were very clearly not the local resident participants, nor the representatives from local advocacy and social service agencies.

Eventually Paul D. would also tell me that he didn't like **me**, because in my own work as an evaluator for Weed & Seed, I refused his request to apply pressure on the leader of the Ocean Bay CDC (which he had helped form, and as a result he had a hand in hiring her). She had objected to his adding requirements for reporting her work to him that had not been included in her original contract (which had specified that she should report to the funding agency only). He made it clear to me that he was angry with her for "being difficult" with him. His request that I persuade her to report directly to him was hardly covered by my own contract. He was up-front in telling me to use my role as evaluator to pressure her, and was incensed by my refusal. He said he would make sure that "everyone knew" I could not be trusted, that I was "two-faced."

This episode entailed no notable consequences for me, though like the Weed & Seed consultant I wondered if and when it might come back to haunt me, given Paul D.'s close ties to NYPD, QDA, the US Attorney and the Police Athletic League – all institutions with which I had engaged in program evaluation in the past. In an earlier case, when Paul D. first introduced me to the then-US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York – a woman of considerable power and influence – and before my work evaluating the Weed & Seed chapter had formally begun, he said to her, "I want you to meet the person who is going to write about what a great job we're doing with Weed & Seed here in Rockaway." She was noticeably taken aback, as was I, and she corrected his interpretation, gently, I thought, saying, "Well, the good work and research lie ahead."

As the new leadership from the local NAACP took the reins at Weed & Seed, they were met with subtle yet powerful resistance from Paul D., whose influence was still perceived as significant given that the Library also served as the fiscal agent for Weed &

Seed. Following the change in leadership, the Library suspended the funds provided until then for breakfast for the Weed & Seed steering committee meetings. The meetings were held mid-morning each month and sometimes lasted more than two hours; for working people and community residents alike, a few refreshments made quite a difference. This sudden disappearance of breakfast was obvious to anyone who had been faithfully attending meetings over the years, and was understood widely as a message. As I said, in the Rockaways respect and its opposite are finely measured, even in donuts and coffee.

Recall that Paul D.'s predecessor as Weed & Seed site coordinator in Far Rockaway had been Laura Jane B., the NYPD grants officer who was also involved in PRYSE. He had succeeded her as coordinator at Weed & Seed after her retirement from the NYPD, while she stayed on as a paid consultant to Weed & Seed. A few months into his tenure, her relationship with him had soured to the point where she quit Weed & Seed altogether. The community residents and non-profit leaders I interviewed after her departure described her as someone who had worked hard to offer skills and vital training in fundraising and outreach to inexperienced residents.

This was attested to by an Ocean Bay CDC member, who spoke in defense of Weed & Seed (and also of Paul D.) at the CDC's meeting with the US Attorney's representatives and police at the Senior Center: The lady said that she had been on a gang task force funded with Weed & Seed money. Task force participants had received training designed to enable them to recognize gangs, and she said that the nine-week program had helped prevent graffiti in her building; in fact, she said that three years later, there was still no graffiti in her building. The same woman added that because of Weed

& Seed, she had learned how to write a grant and get money.¹³⁵ She said that there were now more police with whom she and other residents had built relationships, and that they, along with Paul D. from the library, had even helped her tenants' patrol secure walkie-talkies. For these reasons she didn't want anyone to say that the police had not made an impact in the community.

Nevertheless, the general verdict at Weed & Seed after Laura Jane B.'s departure was that it had become far more difficult for the largely unremunerated Weed & Seed steering committee to successfully organize people and resources, and to secure funding for the project's work. In Far Rockaway, resident objections within the Weed & Seed group prompted the subsequent change in the leadership. Elsewhere in the country, groups formed to try to stop Weed & Seed altogether.

In St. Petersburg in the 1990s, and again in Los Angeles and Seattle in the early 2000s, residents and community organizers created coalitions to oppose the implementation of Weed & Seed in low-income, African-American and Latino neighborhoods. In Florida, just before the implementation of a proposed Weed & Seed plan, police shot a young black motorist, prompting "racial disturbances" and leading community activists to strongly advocate against Weed & Seed. St. Petersburg Police Chief Goliath Davis III turned down a \$100,000 Weed and Seed grant in 1997, saying it "heightened perceptions of racial bias by focusing enforcement efforts on a predominantly black neighborhood" (Lima, 2007, para. 4). The money however was later accepted by the St. Petersburg department and used for training and paying back overtime for its city-wide narcotics squad (Lima, 2007).

¹³⁵ By contrast, of the nine funded partners in the PRYSE project, all but one – the smallest and most "grassroots" of the organizations – employed professionals responsible for grant-seeking and fundraising.

A Pittsburgh alternative radio program covered cuts to the Weed & Seed program there in 2005. According to James, a resident interviewed on the program:

The problem that I see with Weed and Seed is... as far as the weeding money goes: it produces this hyper, rabid type of policing... [They] are so eager to meet policing quotas... the people who are supposedly advocating for the community largely profit off the money that they make; they get their own salaries paid, they get their own pet projects paid...

The issue of who really benefited financially from PRYSE, Weed & Seed and other initiatives that intended to involve the “community” always loomed in the background and occasionally erupted during my years of work and research in the Rockaways. In particular, the relative wealth of the Family Health Clinic would become a source of great resentment over the years and lead some local non-profits to leave the Coalition. At the Rockaway Weed & Seed, the conflict over the site coordinator also being the fiscal repository was obvious to community residents, but not before this was pointed out to them as a violation of the by-laws by the consultant who so angered Paul D.

James, the resident interviewed in Pittsburgh, offered an insight into Weed & Seed that resonated with the experience of Rockaway residents:

Even when there is a community-building meeting where they supposedly try to acquire the voice of the community, it is poorly advertised, it is at a time when most people can't go because they're working, and it's totally out of touch. And I think sometimes they believe their own lies, their own propaganda to the point where they can build this type of righteousness that makes them not feel bad when they call the police and someone ends up dead.

We have seen that for the four years of PRYSE, and despite repeated requests from resident participants in the Coalition, no meetings (nor any Weed & Seed meetings)

were ever held in the evening, with a single exception. Meetings never offered child care, despite many requests. The PRYSE Coalition and Weed & Seed were organizations of organizations, demanding participation of residents but lacking any funding to compensate those efforts.

Another resident of the affected area in Pittsburgh echoed some of the anger and suspicions voiced by members of the Ocean Bay CDC. When asked if she supported the Weed & Seed strategy in her neighborhood, she said,

All those people over there are white. Where do they come from? They are dressed up in suits. Where do they come from? They only come here when they want something (Rust Belt Radio, 2005).

The Pittsburgh resident was speaking after a Weed & Seed meeting in her area. All of the people from Weed & Seed had been white men in suits – just like the visit of the US Attorney’s representative to Ocean Bay CDC that I witnessed in 2004.

It is not often lost on residents of “targeted” communities that although the Weed & Seed rhetoric embraces grassroots approaches to local problems, they usually first hear of the program’s existence when a US Attorney or the local police announce that their neighborhood has been pre-selected as a target. Nevertheless, some residents welcome the opportunity to interact with criminal justice representatives, receive access to resources and technical training, and become involved in an effort directed at their own neighborhood. The reality of high street crime, or at the very least, of high fear of street crime, is one that should not be downplayed. The elderly women at the Ocean Bay CDC table argued about whether they felt safe to walk in their neighborhood at night. They knew, as did the neighborhood youths whom we will meet in the focus groups (in the next chapter), that some of the people living on the margins in Rockaway pose a real

threat to life and property because they possess firearms and protect their illegal activities using those means. But they mocked the US attorney for suggesting that they, or their neighbors, become informants in the guise of community input to improve their neighborhood. There is a current of social justice that runs throughout the refusal to cooperate with criminal justice strategy, and a very real concern to protect young people from a system into which they might disappear.

Rockaway Truancy Center

Tensions between residents (particularly young people) of the Eastern end of the peninsula and representatives of law enforcement and the courts provided an inexhaustible source of conflict. The QDA community assistants told me about a meeting they organized once with the 101st Precinct at the neighborhood public high school, to discuss the problems youth have with law enforcement, as well as police concerns about a number of issues, including a series of robberies of Chinese food delivery employees. The youth in attendance were inspired to ask why they get picked up or singled out by police when they have done nothing wrong – certainly a well-known fact among youth of color in New York City and in urban areas nationwide. The QDA staff told me that the police became hostile and defensive. This scenario repeated itself at a similar meeting in a middle school, although this time, in the QDA staff's telling, it was the young people who were hostile. The QDA staff in the end attributed the hostility at both meetings to bad facilitation.

These tensions follow an ebb and flow, as in other majority-ethnoracial minority and majority-low-income urban neighborhoods. Sometimes tensions arise even between

the major law and justice institutions, as was the case with one of the most interesting projects on the peninsula initiated by the Queens District Attorney's Office: its establishment of a Truancy Center at the Macedonian Church on Beach 67th Street, in collaboration with NYPD, the Board of Education and the Police Athletic League. Before the center opened, all children picked up as truant in the Rockaways had been taken to the Board of Education's faraway center in Jamaica, nearer to the geographic center of Queens. According to QDA staff, the new center in the heart of the Rockaway community was supposed to facilitate involvement of parents, students, schools and community representatives and thus to provide "an opportunity for positive intervention in the youth's life." Schools system personnel assigned to the Truancy Center "focus on leveraging services available through the school system to ensure students return to and stay in school." The Police Athletic League provided social work and outreach staff on-site, and worked with students and their families to give counseling, support, and referrals where needed.

The Executive Assistant D.A. was careful to tell me that from the start his office saw a clear potential conflict of interest between social work and law enforcement, and wanted to be sure to separate these aspects in the Rockaway Truancy Center's work. One QDA staff member told me that when the Truancy Center first opened, the District Attorney's staff was forced to reprimand police officers who were stopping by because of the impression that the center served as a sort of "stop and shop" for picking up young people who might be engaged in illegal activities. This was exactly the sort of situation QDA had intended to avoid, but the officers demonstrated an expectation that the new

center would comply with their requests. (Because the officers in question were not identified to me, I was not able to hear their side of this story.)

Conflicts like these were telling, but in a sense predictable. Volumes of empirical and anecdotal evidence have long confirmed the existence of distrust and mistrust between law enforcement and low-income communities of color in the United States. The social science research has found that people in high-crime neighborhoods simultaneously hold strong negative opinions of police and yet want more police protection. The two views are not mutually exclusive. People who live in the Rockaways support reduction in crime, and some advocate for increased police presence to help meet that goal; many of those who do, however, join others in also advocating for a reform in police practice. People want law enforcement, *and* they want it to be conducted with procedural fairness. Young people in particular are influenced in their opinions of policing by dimensions of procedural justice such as the demeanor with which they are approached, whether they are treated with respect and dignity, or whether they have a chance to be heard before judgment (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004; Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

Experiences of procedural injustice are vivid and yet do not necessarily dispose young people against police in practice. This was a recurring theme in my focus group interviews with the young men and women from a Rockaway high school, especially when they discussed school safety agents. As one young man described it to me: “One day he’s your friend and next day he’s yelling at you to take off your hat like he don’t know you.”

“Turf Battles” – Perceptions and Realities

Among the challenges articulated in the original PRYSE proposal were the safety concerns of Rockaway residents young and old. Focusing mostly on the five primary “violent gangs” in the area as identified by the Police Department, the proposal also propounds an undocumented finding that young people in the area were “unwilling to venture far from their turf.” The proposal emphasized the necessity of locating services in neutral places lest the strength of connection to one’s turf render the services “effectively inaccessible.” Disputes over the rights and privileges of belonging in a geographical space are neither limited to youth nor to those with few economic resources. However, in Far Rockaway and the housing developments on the peninsula, those tensions and disputes were most easily witnessed in the violence of young men.

Disputes over turf were a common concern at QDA. The philosophy of community prosecution advocates concentrating efforts and resources in geographical areas with high rates of violent crime, such as Far Rockaway. Not long after I began working there, as I mentioned earlier, it became clear that territorial disputes – real and imagined – were thought common among residents of all ages, and were used to explain many violent incidents. One lengthy article from August 2004 in the *New York Times* quotes several residents to the effect that long-standing feuds are real, but also admits “many residents downplay the feuds, which they call sporadic incidents exaggerated into local legend and perpetuated by young braggarts, the media and the police” (Kilgannon, 2004).

This issue of territoriality was raised during a PRYSE Steering Committee meeting when Oscar M. told of an incident centered on tensions between youth from different housing developments:

*There was a knife incident inside MS ***. What happened was a student came into the school [having been] told... [by someone] from the outside that "I'm going to beat you up after school." This kid lived in – I think it was Edgemere. The people who were threatening him were from Ocean Village. So you had these two factions going on. And they found this large steak knife on him. And as a result of that we had to lock down the school. And it was School Safety, the principal and every single teacher that was available: we did a weapons sweep. We swept the whole school in terms of looking for weapons. We went everywhere. I participated in that.*

On March 9, 2003, eight people were shot and two stabbed in an incident in a Manhattan arcade and nightclub which ended with the arrests of four residents of the Rockaway peninsula ranging in age from 17 to 22. The police investigator interviewed by the press claimed that the victims and perpetrators had grown up together. "This is a 'my project is tougher than your project' kind of thing. These guys have been beating up on each other since they were eight years old. There was always an argument over which project was tougher" (Schwach, 2003, para. 5). Even the Police Commissioner characterized the motivations fueling this incident as "a longstanding rivalry between youths at two housing projects, the Ocean Towers [sic] Houses and the Edgemere Houses in Far Rockaway that has apparently been going on for years" (para. 6). While he misidentified the name of the housing complex as Ocean Towers rather than Ocean Village, locals understood what he was talking about.

According to the local paper, *The Wave*, a teacher interviewed about the night in question said, "The feud between the two housing complexes has been going on for many years, and it often spills over into the schools. I would estimate that more than half of the

fighters are over 'turf' rather than over some perceived difference" (Schwach, 2003, para. 7). Having asked everyone I formally interviewed, and informally at meetings and other community gatherings, no one can fully articulate how or why these turf disputes begin. One man interviewed by the *New York Times* may have captured the essence of what many residents saw as the issue, when he said, "an idiot from one project got into it with an idiot from the other project, and then they had to get him back. But now it's just kids talking tough, not a constant and ongoing thing. People turn it into something it's not and give the 'hood a bad reputation" (Kilgannon, 2004).

In a more recent example (February 2007) approximately 50 people were arrested on drug charges, most of them residents of one of the housing developments on the peninsula. Thirty-one search warrants were executed following a period of several months in which undercover officers purchased a variety of illegal substances from area residents. When asked to characterize the nature of the problem, however, the head of the Queens Narcotics Unit said, "This is a longstanding dispute over all kinds of personal issues, not necessarily having to do with the drug trade... It's a Hatfield and McCoys-type situation down there" (Hirshon and White, 2007).

Tensions may emerge from some unspecified but compelling historical incident held in the community's collective memory, or from resentments over differing amenities in different developments. During the focus group I held with local teenagers, some youth mentioned to me that one development has a swimming pool while another does not; both young and adult residents may police "outsiders" against making use of the pool. The Executive Assistant D.A. told me that in his mind, "where they live is their territory, plain and simple."

Whether these struggles over toughness, resources and the frustrations of life on the peninsula, particularly in housing developments, are exaggerated by the media or sociologists, the fact remains that those highest in the hierarchy of the District Attorney's office and the Police Department maintain the notion of rivalry or feud to describe the historical nature of this type of conflict. The representatives from social service agencies, as well as local residents participating in PRYSE, shared the perception that turf mattered. Their conclusions were often based on their own experiences, particularly with children and their parents in the local public schools.

Disputes were also not limited to African American youth, as Rockaway retains pockets of other long-standing ethnic and cultural groups. PRYSE Project Manager Brenda Z., reflecting on these disputes during our interview at the end of the initiative, wanted to remind that not all disputes took place on the Eastern end of the peninsula. She recalled a conflict

between the Irish and the Jews... there was an incident at Beach 129th Street, which is a small shopping street in Belle Harbor, between these Orthodox boys... There's a school there, a residential school on the corner, tiny. And some girls from the Catholic school at the other end of the street. And there was an altercation. And it really blew up. First, it was a way of getting the two communities together to try to establish some sort of commonality. There was a Jewish girl in Bays Water, over the summer, who was raped. And again, community leaders came in...

These communities are of long standing; recall that since the 1930s and 1940s, the three largest ethnoracial groups in the Rockaways were the "Irish Americans, Jews, and African Americans" (Kaplan and Kaplan, 2003, p. 22). Although – as Brenda Z. said – other groups have their struggles, few of them capture the widespread attention of media, which today mostly focus on conflicts among poor and black youth. In addition, the

youth most likely to find themselves entering the criminal justice system are not from the white ethnic communities. However, the “altercation” described above actually resulted in the arrest of three 16-year-old males from the Yeshiva when, according to police, they approached three 13-year-old females from the Catholic high school down the street and began making anti-Catholic remarks. The local paper published several angry letters following the story that headlined in February 2003: “3 Yeshiva Students Arrested For Harassing Catholic Girls” (Schwach, 2003). Residents took exception to the headline for having assigned guilt, while others argued that as Orthodox boys are taught not to interact with females of any religion, the Catholic girls must have initiated the confrontation. While religious leaders from both faiths met after the incident, actual young people from the two groups were never brought together in a concomitant effort to address hostilities and bridge differences.

Brenda Z. emphasized that leaders in the community should harness residents’ strong emotions to produce positive change in the wake of local tragedies. But she also offered the following explanations for the violence that occurred among residents of different housing projects in the Eastern end:

I think that when people have nothing, they have the turf under their feet. And so you have your housing gangs, or however-located gangs. People need to have some pride in something. So if there are little opportunities, you get it where you can and that’s why I think the gangs have been so effective here.

Not only the major gangs like the Bloods and the Crips and the Latin Kings. But the drug families: The Hammels family, the Edgemere/Arverne, the Redfern. The kids from Hammels and the kids from Arverne can’t go to the same schools together and the parents can’t talk to each other because they have turf. They have ownership... it’s like West Side Story.

You want ownership of something and to identify with something. That's why the Kwanzaa event is such an important piece that it brings four housing developments together. Even if it's just a few in number, it's the idea that four housing developments are planning and organizing, and [that] kids and families are coming from all four [developments], is, in this community, phenomenal.

The Kwanzaa event, as well as a Multicultural Family Festival first held in August 2001 with co-sponsorship from PRYSE and the local Weed & Seed, represented points of celebration for residents and professionals in PRYSE, as many shared the sense that bringing people from a variety of turfs together was a notable accomplishment. But as well will return to in Chapter 8, the turf issues that both professionals and community residents alike were so well-versed in would only be addressed indirectly in this “picnics and participation” version of community building.

In this case, Brenda Z. is a social worker explaining conflicts through the impacts of poverty, but criminal justice professionals would sometimes offer the same explanations, particularly when speaking about the issue of limited resources.

Teachable Moments, Intimate Law Enforcement?

Three decades ago, Donzelot argued that “rather marginal at the beginning of the century, the social worker is gradually taking over from the teacher in the mission of civilizing the social body...” (1979, p. 96). Today, gradually taking over from the social worker is the police officer, or also: the youth officer. Driven by federal grant-making and by the shift to community-labeled policing and justice strategies (in combination with more intensive surveillance and the “law and order” spirit that generated “zero tolerance” and the like), this sector of government has helped forge a stronger and more intimate

connection between schools, police and district attorneys, as well as mental health providers, than existed in the past.

In the PRYSE project, differing strategies for working with young people were marked by the distinction between what mental health and social service professionals call the “teachable moment.” A surprising number of the police and prosecutors working on the project emphasized how important it was to keep young people out of the criminal justice system; they were well-schooled in the statistics and knew the system’s impact on a young person’s life and family from much experience. Still, community members questioned their sincerity, and doubted that they were qualified to tell which young people had the potential for what kind of life simply by virtue of being representatives of criminal justice institutions.

As told in Chapter 5, for a time during the field work I volunteered in a Rockaway public library where, several months earlier, a young man had threatened the librarian and others with a gun. The branch staff and the Queens Library security director thereupon considered ways to address incidents of violence or disruptive behavior. Around the same time there was a problem with four 18-year-olds that the library security director described as “terrorizing the library.” Those youth were arrested and served 90 days for trespassing. It was the first time that a New York City library building got an order of protection. The library (and the community) requested a police patrol every day during the peak after-school hours. Although the incident had inspired fear among library staff, there was also an ongoing and frustrating struggle with teenagers in general. It costs \$60,000 to have two guards working each day; without the guards, the conflict among young people was described as constant. As the security director put it, “the

librarians did not see themselves as – nor were they trained to be – babysitters or disciplinarians.” Adults in the community had stopped coming to the library between 2 and 5 pm because of the volume of young people. However, the staff was clear that youth have a right to the library, too. They did not want to exclude teenagers but to find a way to “peacefully co-exist.”

The library staff struggled to reconcile their impetus to see moments of conflict as “teachable” with their very real threat of bodily harm, and also to balance the fears of adult and young patrons intimidated by (mostly black) male teenagers. They hoped, as at other branches, to respect the rights and needs of both the teens and the adults. In the end, the library opted to pursue “social work strategies” to address conflict and disruptions. Training was provided to library staff to educate them about youth development and communication techniques to diffuse tense situations. In addition, a social worker was hired to work directly with teenagers at one branch. This strategy was notable for its support by Paul D., the director of library security. After the branch hired the social worker, police incidents were reduced to zero within six months. The security director reminded me that when young people in Rockaway are “thrown out of school” there is no other place for them to go, so they often spend time in the library. He was adamant that funding cuts would limit the ability of the library to serve as a place for people to go who have no where else to go.

In my interviews with youth officers during my years as evaluator of the PRYSE project, several of the (usually male) officers showed insight into the situation of youth exposed to regular opportunities for illegal behavior. They might know that a kid has tried marijuana, maybe even more than once. In these cases the trust that officers have

accumulated with the youth is both evident and something with which to leverage moral suasion. Youth officers hold the threat of law and punishment. They draw the line at sale of illegal substances – in fact one reacted quite strongly when I misspoke during an interview and insinuated that the officer might look the other way in the face of pot *selling*. The officer assured me that in the hierarchy of involvement with marijuana, there is a clear line between trying it and selling it: it is only with knowledge of use, rather than sale, that an officer would still hold out hope for a kid. There is great intimacy implied by such relationships – as well as possible naïveté of the youth involved – by adults holding the power to arrest while becoming as familiar with local kids as to know who has tried marijuana and who hasn't.

Policing in public schools and in other public spaces such as libraries allows for such intimacy and permits an enhanced surveillance of students. Surveillance allows knowledge about particular youth to be generated and matched against a “continuum of imprecise normality” (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997, 450). Some will not measure up to the ideal, however imprecise. With the school, the family and other social institutions (those of civil society and of disciplinary society) said to be in crisis, we are told there is a need for more surveillance. Particularly after the events of September 11, 2001, which brought a sudden mass feeling of existential vulnerability, the already ongoing loss of civil liberties was more easily exchanged for the promise of security.

With heightened surveillance comes a new social subject: one whose consent is no longer required (M. Guzmán, personal communication, 2002). As capitalist production is ever-globalized, societies that once secured social order and orderly production via disciplinary institutions (such as the school, or the prison) now look to

“democratize” power – in the sense that power becomes more penetrating and subtle (Thomas, 1998). As Hardt and Negri (2000, p. 23) put it: “the society of control might thus be characterized by an intensification and generalization of the normalizing apparatuses of disciplinarity that internally animate our common and daily practices.”

So ads on the New York City subway extol us that “there are 16 million eyes in the city,” with the MTA and NYPD counting on all of them to report suspicious activity. Similarly, the philosophies of community policing and community prosecution ask that citizens play an active and theoretically equal role alongside law enforcement in securing and maintaining social order within their neighborhoods. Members of society will differ in the extent to which they are willing and able to participate in that mission, further complicating the meanings of safety, order and community. In the final analysis, the power and force that law enforcement and criminal justice system representatives can and do access is hard to square with building trust in low-income, compromised neighborhoods whose residents may be invited to participate in “community” structures of justice and policing, but lack a true countervailing force. They may decline to participate, but then what alternatives are available? When we consider that a hefty number of the relationships to which I was exposed during my many years in Rockaway were between criminal justice system staff and youth, those not yet of the age of consent, questions of trust become more compelling and complex, as we see in the next chapter.

**I teach the children who
were raised by wolves.**
(Rockaway school teacher)

CHAPTER 7

Young People in the Rockaways – Beyond the School Violence Paradigm

All of the funded programs of PRYSE defined youth as their central preoccupation, even when youth were not directly served, although in conversations around the PRYSE meeting tables one might conclude that the Coalition was more interested in preventing young people from *engaging in* violence than in *protecting them from* violence. Thinking about what we meant when we advocated for “safe schools and healthy students” was really a luxury reserved for all-day retreats. It was during one of those retreats, in 2001, that we agreed upon the following vision and mission of PRYSE that would guide the work going forward:

OUR VISION

A safe, inclusive, beautiful and unified community where generations of children and families are socially, emotionally, physically, academically, and economically healthy and strong.

OUR MISSION

To mobilize our community and all its stake holders to integrate, coordinate, strengthen, and develop resources and services and to create the trust necessary to support our children, youth and families as caring, capable, responsible, and resilient individuals.

The mission was focused on community mobilization and went beyond youth, and this was directly related to our inability to focus on the schools as the center of the project, as was happening in many of the other 76 SS/HS sites that were active in 2000 when PRYSE won its grant. The original work plan for PRYSE in December 2000 included funding for 42 distinct programs to be conducted by the eleven partners, either individually or in cooperation. As Table 7.1 shows, no fewer than 20 of the 42 PRYSE programs aimed to provide direct service to children or youth. The NYPD and QDA had a higher percentage of programs working directly with local youth (100% and 75%, respectively) than the other subjects of this dissertation (though, as the table shows three of the original partners also devoted all of their resources to funding direct service to youth). The school district, by using PRYSE funding on equipment, safety agents and school aides, was along with the evaluation and the Bank Street programs focused on “training the trainer” among those partners using no resources for direct service to youth.

Table 7.1: Proportion of Direct Services to Youth, PRYSE Programs

| Organization/entity <i>(Italics indicate subjects of this research)</i> | Programs of direct service to children/youth | Total of original programs planned and funded | Percent direct service |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|
| F·E·G·S | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| Hospital Center* | 1 | 1 | 100% |
| <i>NYPD</i> | 7 | 7 | 100% |
| RDRC | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| <i>QDA</i> | 3 | 4 | 75% |
| <i>Mediation Services</i> | 4 | 12 | 33% |
| <i>Family Clinic</i> | 1 | 4 | 25% |
| <i>Ministerial coalition</i> | 1 | 5 | 20% |
| Bank Street College | 0 | 3 | 0% |
| <i>Evaluation Team</i> | 0 | 1 | 0% |
| <i>School District</i> | 0 | 2 | 0% |
| ALL PARTNERS | 20 | 42 | 48% |

* Note: The Hospital Center program was never implemented.

The evaluators, along with project management, were ever mindful that the coalition had committed itself, in its reports to the feds, at least, to the perspective that “the best approach to addressing the problem of youth violence is a comprehensive community approach.” And everyone was aware that:

All 77 sites (of SS/HS around the country at the time) must answer the question: What was the impact of the SS/HS initiative on healthy child development and a safe school environment in their community? Regardless of the multiple concerns any community has, SS/HS has only two goals – enhance community and school capacity to address school violence and healthy student development (PRYSE report, January 1-June 30, 2002, p. 5).

In the five-year period from 1999 to 2005, even as I carried out evaluation research employing qualitative and quantitative methods on behalf of PRYSE, I also recorded consistent and regular ethnographic observations, both to help answer the “impact” question that I had been hired to pursue, but also to explore intellectual concerns about new federalism and poverty-reduction policy in an urban environment like Rockaway. Over time I came to see that the absence of actual voices of youth from the processes by which PRYSE activities were devised, managed, and judged with regard to impact represented an important gap in the work of evaluation and in my own research as a sociologist. In April and May 2002, after some delays (as covered in Chapter 5), I was able to organize and co-conduct a series of focus groups with students from one of the two local high schools at which PRYSE was active, to gain their perspectives on what safety in school and their neighborhoods meant to them, and to ask: What concerns did they consider most important at their schools and – for the majorities of the participants who also lived on the peninsula – in their neighborhoods? What needs did they see in

their schools and neighborhoods? What did they like about this place where they likely spent a majority of their time? The focus groups provided much-needed triangulation with other data gathered. Specifically, we were able to learn that youth and adults shared several key perceptions about life on the peninsula, but that there were also important areas of difference, which are reviewed below.

It was, surprisingly, through two students in separate focus groups that I first heard about one of the PRYSE-supported programs, the Rockaway Youth Leadership Council, in which the two were involved. The group met regularly for about a year, as far as I was able to tell, and they held two community-wide events:

I am on the Rockaway Youth Leadership Council. PRYSE gives us a certain amount of money. With the money that they give us, we can do things in the Rockaways. We can work on some of the thoughts that we have. We (are) working on the multi-cultural festival. And a summer conference at the middle school. We'll have workshops. It will be about everything.

Funded PRYSE partner and the non-profit “Community Mediation Organization” (CMO) had developed the leadership council, which fluctuated in numbers of participants, but averaged around ten students recruited them from CMO’s pool of trained peer mediators at the local high schools. They met every week for a few months, and eventually held a youth forum and talent show at Beach Channel High School in August 2002. In the spring of 2003, the group took trips to Johns Hopkins University, Howard University and the Smithsonian, but did not continue to meet after that year, in part due to the challenges of organizing it amongst the many other responsibilities of the assistant director of the mediation group, who had made it happen in the first place.

I was concerned, then and now, that the youth with whom partners were interacting were the students for whom not many difficulties were arising, despite finding themselves in schools that suffered from neglect and heavy surveillance. Cassius C., in particular, but also the youth officers and Oscar M. were all aware that many of the youth on the peninsula had already become involved with the criminal justice system. The data in the following section were gathered to measure our perceptions against some small empirical realities.

Data On School Suspensions, Involvements With Police, and School Safety

During the PRYSE project, many schools in Rockaway had higher rates for school suspensions than average in New York City as a whole. At the two high schools in which PRYSE was active – Beach Channel and Far Rockaway – the picture from the 1998-99 to 2002-02 school years showed a peak in suspensions at both schools in 2000-01 and a slight decline the following year, as seen in Figure 7.1.

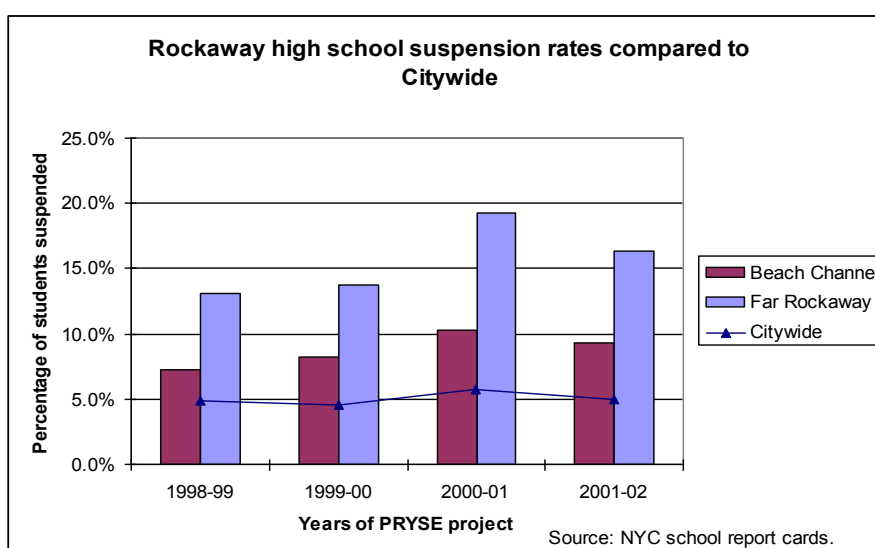


Figure 7.1: Suspension Rates at Two Rockaway High Schools Compared to Citywide, 1998-2002

While suspensions were relatively high in the peninsula on average (with one of the middle schools involved in our project recording a suspension rate of 30 percent in one year, a number that demands emphasis: *three in ten*), in New York City as a whole some parents at this time were complaining that not enough students were being suspended because principals reportedly feared for their reputations if their suspension numbers were too high (Williams, 2003). By this time, most suspensions were “in-house,” but other parents, on the peninsula, at least, were concerned that students of color were disproportionately facing these punishments, and that suspensions, in-house or not, did little to address the deeper roots of disruption that got students suspended in the first place.

Several recent studies indicate that the best predictor of a student being suspended or expelled is not the behavior in which the student engages, but whether that student has ever been suspended before (NYCLU, et al., 2009, p. 9). That indicates that a first suspension, even for minor infractions, amounts to being placed on an “expulsion track” in which the odds of subsequent suspensions and expulsion rise regardless of the severity of the subsequent behavioral infractions. A further concern developed as the presence of law enforcement and district attorneys created the potential for more criminal justice system involvement for children who in the past may have been disciplined by teachers and school administrators. The Legal Aid Society emphasizes this point:

Students are often suspended and arrested for minor offenses. New York City has developed a juvenile and criminal system in which primarily low-income children of color are arrested and prosecuted, often to the fullest extent, particularly in Family Court, for what frequently amounts to normative teen behavior or in legal terms, misdemeanors and violations. Incidents such as talking back to an officer and minor school conflicts are not addressed through counseling, mediation and the engagement of families as they are for middle and upper class families. Instead, minor

incidents are often blown far out of proportion – often with devastating consequences for children and their families (Legal Aid Society, 2009, p. 6).

In point of clarification, the Legal Aid Society also draws out the distinction between “principal suspensions,” which are largely at the principals’ discretion, and the “superintendent suspensions” generally triggered by specific, severe infractions:

There are two types of suspensions used by the NYC DOE: principal suspensions and superintendent’s suspensions. Principal suspensions last for up to five days. There is no limit on how many times a principal may suspend a student over the course of an academic year. The Chancellor’s regulations enumerate many specific infractions for which a superintendent’s suspension must be imposed, such as using a weapon to inflict injury or selling illegal drugs (Legal Aid Society, 2009, p. 7).

But the deeper concern here was that students were being suspended for much less serious infractions, such as talking back to school safety officers, writing graffiti or ignoring prohibitions against bringing glass bottles into school.

When the PRYSE project began, we examined youth arrest data from the NYPD, and we followed up in each year of the initiative’s implementation. To gain perspective, the Evaluation Team arranged to gather data from 1990 to 2003 and to compare Citywide figures to the two local Rockaway precincts. These data supported what others had also observed: Order maintenance policing in the NYPD included a focus on low-level law violations not only for adults, but also for youth (see Nolan, 2007 for a broader analysis of those data Citywide). The Citywide and Rockaway *felony* arrest rates were falling at exactly the same time as the misdemeanor arrest rates were *rising*, as demonstrated in Figure 7.2.

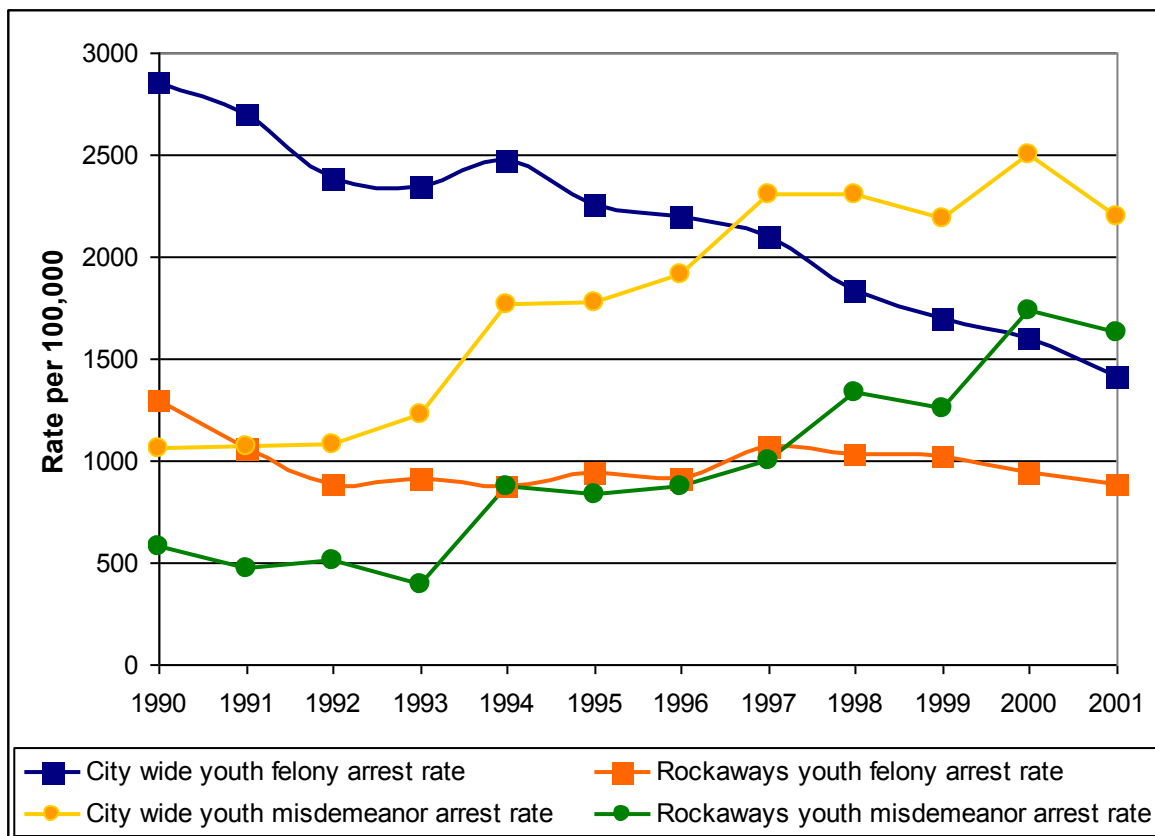


Figure 7.2. Citywide and Rockaways Youth Felony and Youth Misdemeanor Arrest Rates, 1990-2001.

Other analyses make clear that the top focus of “quality of life” policing beginning in the Giuliani administration (1994 to 2001) was on smoking marijuana in public view (“MPV”), so that “by 2000, MPV had become the most common misdemeanor arrest, accounting for 15% of all NYC adult arrests” (Golub, et al., 2007, 131; also see Levine, 2007). Detailed misdemeanor arrest data for juveniles is unavailable from public police records and so definitive conclusions about the nature of those misdemeanor arrests are impossible. In a 2000 *New York Times* article, Sangupta notes that “despite a sharp decline in juvenile arrests in recent years, even for serious felonies, more youngsters are now detained, awaiting trial, in New York City’s juvenile jails than at any other time in a decade,” while adding that no evidence existed that

juveniles were being arrested for more serious crimes than in the past (para. 1). The reporter could not find agreement in explaining the trend, with defense attorneys arguing that judges were behind the increase, detaining more youth for lesser offenses than in the past. Judges placed the onus on a failure of reliable parental supervision. The article did not entertain the possibility of a more structural explanation, nor did it consider the impact of other institutions that bear on youth entry into the system, beyond the family, such as the school safety agents, as the Legal Aid Society pointed out to the New York City Council.

In 2004, one of the Rockaway public high schools would be named as an “Impact School.” Under this mayoral initiative, the number of police officers assigned permanently to a targeted school would be doubled. The City received \$6.25 million from the United States Department of Justice to increase the number of police officers at the “Impact Schools” (National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University, 2006; Drum Major Institute, 2005). The operating assumption of school/police partnerships such as the Impact Schools program is that disruptive behavior results from *individual problem students*, rather than from a *social environment* that fosters maladaptive behavior (see Casella, 2002; Hyman and Perone, 1998; and Noguera, 1995 for detailed analyses of the ways in which school safety practices ignore and sometimes reinforce the structural roots of inequalities that help produce unsafe school environments).

Although the PRYSE community survey was designed to capture potential impacts of the work of the Coalition, and much of that work focused on the individual level, we attempted to include some items that would capture parents’ perceptions of the

community. When asked in that community survey, which was repeated three years in a row (2000-2003), to name the most important health and safety issues facing children and teens, Rockaway residents consistently choose drug abuse and drug dealing first (PRYSE/Baruch College, 2003).¹³⁶ When asked to name what is most needed by children and youth in the community, afterschool and recreation programs were the two most reported necessities. We found that less than half of Rockaway public school students took trips away from the peninsula, and that very few teens had summer jobs; even fewer had after-school jobs. We also wanted to get a sense of where parents send their children to school, i.e., on or off the peninsula (these were the questions that provoked such a negative response from the school region representative, as told in Chapter 5). The results can be seen in Figure 7.3 on the following page.

¹³⁶ A telephone survey of 922 randomly selected Rockaway households was conducted by the Baruch Survey Research Unit during May-June 2003; in this last year of the survey, we had a sample of 655 households with children and 267 households without children (households with children were over-sampled). The margins of error were +/- 4% for households with children and +/- 6% for households without children (larger for more specifically defined subgroups, such as households with children in public elementary schools). In 2002, 909 households were surveyed; in 2001, 903 households were surveyed.

Where do Rockaway parents send their children and teens to school?

- Parents can send their children to public or private schools, in the Rockaways or outside the Rockaways.
- A significant percentage of parents send their children to private schools in the Rockaways during the elementary and middle school years.
- Parents increasingly send their children to schools outside the Rockaways as the children grow older, especially for high school.

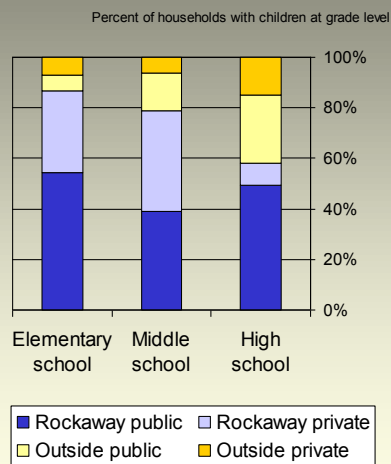


Figure 7.3. Parents Asked Where They Send Their Children to School.

Significantly, more than 40 percent of parents with high school-aged children were sending their children *away from the peninsula*. We then asked those who said they sent their children to schools off of the peninsula their reasons were for doing so (see Figure 7.4 on the following page).

Why don't parents send their children to public schools in the Rockaways?

- A **preference for private or religious schools** is the main reason parents give for not sending their elementary school children to a public school in the Rockaways.
- **Too much violence** in the schools is the main reason for avoiding Rockaway public middle and especially high schools.

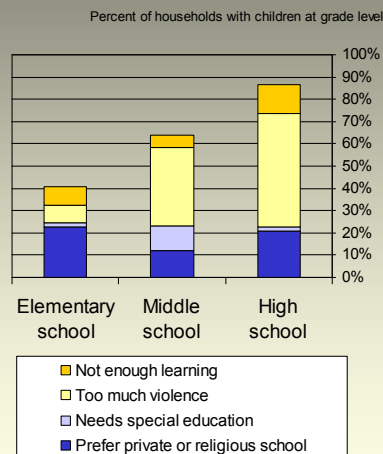


Figure 7.4. Reasons Given by Parents for Sending Children to Schools Outside Rockaway.

Thus “too much violence” was by far the most frequent reason mentioned for sending children outside the peninsula at the middle school and high school grades. I wondered about the extent to which parental fears lined up with the lived experience of youth in Rockaway. What would the students who attend those schools perceived by our respondents as “too violent” say about those spaces?

Rockaway High School Students Speak – Focus Groups

I organized and assisted in conducting three focus groups in April and May 2002 with a total of 41 young people (13 females and 28 males), ranging in age from 14 to 18 years old. The focus groups were mixed in terms of race and ethnicity, but most participants were African American and Latino (by self-identification). All of the student participants attended the same public high school on the Rockaway peninsula, Beach Channel, and with only three exceptions out of the 41, all of them also lived on the peninsula. The groups were moderated by a drama therapist who was working for the Family Health Clinic and was known to all of the students. Although typically a focus group is led by someone unknown to participants, in this case his presence alleviated the challenge of recruiting young people from the neighborhood due to their own and their parents' sense of distrust of outsiders.¹³⁷

The groups were held after school in a diner not far from the high school. Meeting in the diner served as an incentive for many of the participants as it was within walking distance of their high school, although and because many had never before visited it. In general, students were excited to be asked for their opinions as well as to be taken out to dinner by interested adults. Participants also received a \$25 cash stipend at the end of the interview as a further, quite successful, incentive.

In each group, the conversation began by explaining that a group of organizations had been funded to work on improving school safety and the health of young people in the Rockaways. The same questions were posed in all three groups, but each group concentrated on slightly different topics, as will happen organically in any focus group.

¹³⁷ The story of how the groups were organized is told in Chapter 5, section “‘Studied to Death’ – In Search of Youth.” Also in Chapter 5, see “October 2003 – The Woman from Region 5” for the story of incidents and controversies at Beach Channel High School about a year and a half after these focus groups.

Although each group gravitated toward distinct areas of focus, we saw several consistent themes across all three groups. (See Appendix D for the focus group moderator's guide. The following analysis is based on the transcripts; the focus groups were recorded with the permission of the participants.)

When we asked students in these groups what would improve the health and safety of students in their school and neighborhood, the intention was to triangulate, in a sense, with the received wisdom of the funded programs that had *already* implemented various programs with the same goal. We discovered that students found being put in this position – of agency and as experts in a sense – energizing. We had also been doing the same thing with adults via the community survey, as well as in all of the informal and formal interactions with community residents: We were engaging them as required by the funding, but also out of a sense of democracy, and a commitment to a participant observation methodology, to the extent possible. The dilemma, which could have been only partially resolved even if PRYSE had secured other funding, was that learning about the different groups' requests, insights and needs would not necessarily produce any tangible fulfillments.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ The school district liaison prior to the 2003 schools system reform, Wayne G., encountered this challenge in his role as co-chair of the PRYSE Educational and After School Initiatives committee. They had invited a group of parents to discuss safety from their point of view. As was often the case, after-school activities emerged as the priority. However, as Wayne G. explained: "A lot of the parents were saying that they wanted after school programs but there's money attached to doing that and we always – we don't have the money to do a lot of what they want. But there are alternatives that don't have necessarily so much money involved and that was part of the process of asking them what they needed and then try to figure out ways to develop those things without, you know, spending so much money. So, yeah, there are a lot of things they want that we can't provide because we don't have the money for it, so..."

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

Each conversation began by asking whether there are things about the Rockaway community that these youth would like to see change. There was repeated and unanimous agreement that the peninsula needed a movie theater, community and recreation centers, a bowling alley and a mall (any or all of the above).¹³⁹ Indeed, the peninsula has been without a movie theater since the last remaining one closed its doors in 1996 (O’Grady, 2002). The young people interviewed were well aware that without opportunities for employment and for recreation, it is difficult for teenagers to avoid spending time “hanging out” which, in their estimation, often leads to trouble, as one 16-year-old female described:

We need the big mall, because, first of all, that’s keeping us out of trouble and that’s helping some of us that need a job get a job. Either we’re hanging out there or we’re working there; that will keep us off the street and keep us out of trouble, because when you’re out on the street, all you’re doing is getting yourself into trouble.

This student’s perspective, which was greeted with general agreement from her peers in the group interview, reveals the extent to which these young people were well-socialized into the view of the dangers of “the street,” a perspective shared by many of the adults: an association between respectability and idle time spent out of doors. As youth who were, nonetheless, very familiar with the norms of the neighborhood, these young people were well aware that they and their peers might find themselves in the criminal justice system. One young woman elicited a chorus of agreement when she explained her experience of realizing that “*someone you went to elementary and junior*

¹³⁹ The lack of a movie theater remains a political lightning rod (a 2009 candidate for the 31st District Council seat used this lack in his campaigning). Although the “Arverne by the Sea” development originally promised a movie theater as part of its appeal, their website no longer mentions this amenity (as of August 1, 2009).

high school with” was suddenly absent from your high school and neighborhood, and not because he had moved to another neighborhood: “*He’s in jail.*”

While they did not condone it, and some were offended by being put in the same frame, many young people also understood that some people in their neighborhood sell drugs because they have no other realistic options. The youth I met were almost all in full agreement that employment options would change this terrain, as this 17-year-old female explains:

Nobody’s getting in trouble but the teenagers; we need something here because there’s more teenagers in jail than adults... We need something to keep us out of trouble... Some real jobs that we need instead of everybody standing on the corner making their money the illegal way.

In another group a young man reacted to a question about whether drug activity, which some of the students had been discussing (having been asked about the most important safety concerns in their neighborhoods on the peninsula) contributed to students regularly feeling unsafe. Instead of speaking to the sense of safety (which the majority of students had agreed was compromised by “gangs, drug dealers and crack heads,”) he offered a context for the drug activity:

There’s a lot of people doing it because since we in a depression, not a lot of people have jobs, so the only way they could take care of themselves and they families is to sell drugs. It’s that they forced to, not that they want to do it, because most of them are good people. It’s that they have no choice in the matter.

DO YOU FEEL A PART OF THE LIFE AT YOUR SCHOOL?

When we turned the conversation to education, the students were asked about the extent to which they felt they actively participated in the life of their school, specifically in terms of whether there were programs and activities in which they were engaged or

that made them feel a part of things. Keeping in mind that these are young people who were interested enough to come and participate in a focus group, and who had enough of a relationship with the drama therapist to attend, one young woman expressed disappointment at the possibilities she saw for her own career options, as well as a concern that she was not performing up to the academic expectations of the school:

We don't have any programs. The only thing in our school is law. We don't have any programs for people who want to work with hair, we don't have nursing. We don't have nothing in our school but law. We don't have no workshops. We have nothing. Not everybody grow up and want to be a lawyer. All we have is a courtroom. Teach us to go to jail? We don't need a courtroom. Half of us see courtroom out of school a lot of the time! We don't need no courtroom.

Another young woman in the same group agreed:

All we have is a courtroom and the students is not even allowed to go in the courtroom. That's all we have. We don't know to cook. I love to do hair and I'm leaving Beach Channel 'cause I wanna go to Jamaica [another high school] and do my hair. I like to do hair, and I wanna start early on it so by the time I finish high school I'll be ready to go back to school to do my cosmetology. And in that school you can't do nothing. They have no cooking class, no hair class, no business. They tell you they have business class but when am I gonna get into some business, I would like to know? And another thing I would love for them to do is try to let us pick some of our own classes.

The lack of choices may seem on the surface to reflect a sense of adolescents encountering a large school bureaucracy that could not accommodate choice, thereby amplifying their feeling of restriction and frustration. Keep in mind that this will be one of the schools, in 2009, to be formally closed and reduced to smaller educational campuses within the same building. It is also possible that this student's academic difficulties kept her from participation in the business classes offered (and the focus group method did not really permit pursuit of such intimate questions). Regardless, she

captures a sense of the offense encountered in a school that fails to deliver on her interests, and to consider possible constraints on her choices (traveling to a high school out of the neighborhood when one lives in the Rockaways, as she did, is a more serious time commitment, and potentially more expensive). This same student also raised some compelling concerns about young, black female bodies, and the extent to which the school offered choices that offended her, as she explained:

They give us classes – like last year they gave me cheerleading... I just never... Out of that whole term, I passed just once... A lot of girls is not shaped for cheerleading. Some have low self-esteem. You're not gonna get up there, lift up your legs and do all that; how could you just give somebody cheerleading?

Or pool (meaning swimming class) when they don't ask for it? I'm black; I have nappy hair. I'm not supposed to get in no pool and then y'all think I'm gonna walk around the school, like... with my hair looking all messed up? I like to look pretty.

And they just give me classes that I don't... I mean the basics, yeah! English, Global, Science and stuff like that, but cheerleading and pool, all that other stuff, we don't need it. If we don't ask for it, don't give it to us. They don't ask us nothing, not one thing do they ask us.

Her frustration was shared by another girl in the same group who also shared the insult of a physical education curriculum that seemed irrelevant or at least constraining:

OK, we have seven classes a day, alright, we got our math, our science, our English and our social studies. Those other three should be three classes that we would like to take. Alright English, Math, Social Studies and Science are our major subjects. That's what we... I feel that's what we go to school for, to learn that.

Now gym: handball? We don't go to school to learn how to play handball. What are we getting out of that? At least let us pick out the gym that we would like to take, because some want to go to weight training, some would like pool, some would like running because some people want to take up track, but they don't ask us nothing so...

Again, having options for gym may be difficult to negotiate, but it seemed, at least on the surface, that the experience of lacking any sense of choice, or of being consulted, created a tension for students. We had asked if students feel like a part of things at their school – we were trying to capture a sense of whether students in the focus groups had a sense of ownership and agency within their school context, but we had not specified the terms of that sense of participation. The students themselves articulated that they felt they were not at all consulted about their academic and physical education options. Perhaps the options were few at the level of the school, and perhaps the large student body and inadequate funding converged to leave this school feeling more bureaucratic than most. But it seemed that students were acutely aware of the lack of resources and this contributed to the sense that the school was not performing in their best interests.

Known colloquially as “shop class,” vocational education in the United States is now more commonly referred to as “career and technical education” at the high school level and “career education” when pursued in a post-secondary environment (Levesque, et al., 2008). Vocational education has a conflicted history reflecting the challenge of the very purpose of education within the capitalist economy: the pursuit of academic liberal arts on the one hand, or the training and certification of future workers on the other. The students above were expressing a desire for career education options; both would eventually express resentment that they felt they were not taken seriously by teachers and staff because their grade averages were not, as one girl put it, “as high as the next person.” So living in an isolated neighborhood without high academic achievement, they also saw limited options for employment, even with a high school diploma. Another

young man in the same group, who would also later mention that he struggled – and lost the fight – to pass any class *except* gym, became animated by the idea of having a choice of technical courses:

I think we should have wood shop, metal shop; that could be the classes that we could pick. Plastics, cooking classes, nursing, stuff like that instead of just that gym because... [He was cut off by another student agreeing with him.]

It is also worth noting that during this time, Beach Channel High School was not a “school in good standing” according to New York State school accountability standards for secondary-level English Language Arts and Mathematics, though it was meeting the criteria set for graduation. So, while these students were reporting their own individual academic difficulties, the school-level context was one on its way to being restructured.

Not all students in the focus groups were drawn to vocational coursework and some had already considered pursuing a college education, or at least were convinced of the value of one. One young man, when asked what sorts of programs he would welcome in his high school, mentioned that a college advising office to which students could go during their free periods to learn more about preparing for and attending a university would be important. Another young man discussed the reasons why involvement in gangs, even wanna-be gangs, was so foolish for people his age, as he saw gangs as a distraction from what you *really* needed to be doing: “...nowadays without college you can’t do a lot.”

WHAT MAKES FOR A SAFE SCHOOL AND HEALTHY STUDENTS?

Although those of us working on the PRYSE project spent little to no time considering what we really meant by “safe schools” or “healthy students” as a Coalition, it was a question worth exploring among teenagers living in a “targeted” neighborhood.¹⁴⁰ When asked what makes a school a “safe school,” the youth in these interviews both reinforced and challenged the taken-for-granted assumptions of the adults working on the project. The PRYSE project funded only safety equipment, school aides and safety agents in the local public schools, and then only three schools were provided with equipment; all this chosen by the original crafter of the proposal, Cloris G.. Students saw a need for sophisticated and frequent scanning of students, and they acknowledged the reality of potentially violent confrontations at school, although they already attended a school where scanning was taken for granted. In terms of the potential for violence at school, they insisted that the drama teacher and I distinguish between “fighting” and “arguing.” Asked how much of a problem “fighting” was at her school, one female student reached directly for the distinction (in dialogue with others):

M. *Not much, we don't have a lot of fights.*

K. *Who?*

M. *We don't.*

S. *Arguments.*

M. *We have a lot of arguments, but not fights.*

Views among the students on the seriousness of “fighting” ranged from statements like, “We do [have fights in school] but they're not that bad” to the opposite extreme: “It's not fighting, it's killing” that was the real problem in the neighborhood, but not in the school. Each focus group reached general consensus that “arguments” were

¹⁴⁰ The author is grateful to Michelle Fine for making this suggestion to ask youth explicitly “what makes a school safe?”

much more likely to take place at school than what they saw as the more extreme, physical altercations they more often referred to as “fights,” which were much more likely to happen out of school time.

As the discussion of the meaning of a safe school progressed, students concluded that rather than more or better equipment, their schools needed to have committed, concerned principals, staff and teachers, as well as the resources simply sufficient to learn in school, such as adequate books, both in number and condition, and funding for after-school programs. These teenagers expressed the need to have adults in their school who are neither intimidating to them nor insensitive to their needs. One young woman explained that many of her peers are afraid to approach their principal, and expressed the frustration that this dynamic makes school feel less welcoming to her circle of friends:

You need somebody to talk to, like when you want to talk to him [your principal] he's going to listen to you... not someone where when you go there you're scared to even talk to him...

So as this discussion progressed, students began to argue that safety in school, rather than relying upon police, agents or scanners, translated into strong and respectable leadership on the part of the principal, first and foremost. They went so far as to say that they thought it was important, and would appreciate, seeing their own principal teaching some classes, or at least occasionally attending some of them:

He could reinforce the rules that he put out or that the students should abide by. And make himself more involved in the students' activities rather than just being an advisor, or just watching, he could participate and see how it is.

Another student had the experience of feeling misunderstood and offended by a teacher in her school. As so many adults involved in PRYSE had painted a picture of a

peninsula full of parents who lacked adequate parenting skills – and who were also spoken about as if they were themselves “persons in need of supervision” – this student might have been a target of the view that the **real** problem of the Rockaways was in its “culture”:

We need people that we could turn to, to talk to, if we have any problem; if you come to school mad, the first thing they are going to say is, “what’s the problem at home?” Why it has to be a problem at home because I’m mad? “Does your mother beat on you?” Why my mother gotta beat on me because I’m mad?

These students understood violence as a symptom of other things in their schools, and while problematic, not so widespread that it occupied their thoughts regularly. As mentioned above, students did not see many physical fights in school; however, they did report that there were consistent and persistent arguing, teasing and bullying. Often this arguing came about as a result of “he said, she said” talk and led to major conflicts. However, students were well aware that they had access to mediation in their schools, and they also expressed faith in their own abilities to solve their own problems (though this faith was more likely to be expressed by female than male students in these focus groups). This led to frustrations when school officials didn’t share this faith in the students’ ability to talk out their own problems:

They don’t understand, they’re teaching a high school. We’re not in elementary; we’re not in junior high. Alright, say if I have a problem with a girl. I’m not slow, I’m not stupid. If I feel I can solve the problem myself and not have to fight, I’m gonna do that.

*Like one time we all had a problem and instead of mediation solving it with the Deans there, we solved it ourselves and do you know we **still** got in trouble? They **still** called us out? (emphasis hers) We solved our own problem. We stepped to the girls, some respect and stuff, and were like, “let’s talk.” Then the security guards bust in the door like we was*

murderers or something. “Get out! Gimme your ID!” We still got in trouble for talking out our problems. Our parents still got called.

Another girl was a part of this experience and added:

Yes, they called (her mother) and they exaggerate. We in the bathroom and they like, “all of you stand here and give me your ID!” We standing there solving it. My mother at work. They calling her, “Oh Shaquana’s at school starting a big riot, her and her friends, I think they’re in a gang.” I’m in the girls’ bathroom talking, so now, I’m in a gang?! I’m in the girls’ bathroom talking, trying to solve my problems and now I’m in a gang?

In this case, she claimed, the school safety agents were first to make the accusation that Shaquana was “in a gang.” As this same student was the one who had earlier reported that being out on the streets was the equivalent of willing oneself into trouble, it seemed unlikely that she was, in fact, part of a “gang.” One can imagine a school safety agent hearing angry voices in a girls' bathroom, and entering to find a group of girls engaged in an argument. There may even have been tears – we do not know. The safety agent may react as if this were a potentially dangerous confrontation; again, we do not have the benefit of the view from their position. However, one can also imagine that with some training, safety agents could diffuse a situation like this more informally, rather than invoking language that is provocative, such as “gang.” It is this forceful response that is at issue, not only with students, but with adults who would later pressure the City to take a closer look at the ways that safety agents behave more like police in educational environments that demand more flexibility and finesse.¹⁴¹

For instance, the students had a strong critique of suspensions as the appropriate punishment for misbehavior in school. This is particularly salient in the context of a

¹⁴¹ More was said about school safety agents in the focus groups, to which we turn in the next section.

school system in which police and their representatives – school safety agents – now oversee more student conduct than in the past, and so may choose a disciplinary response over the “teachable moment.” As one student asked:

How do they expect us to learn in school (if) for every little thing we do we getting suspended? How are we gonna be in school to learn something? Alright, you miss two days of school; you’re missing a whole lot in one class. In my math class, we move right along. We go through one problem. “Alright, you got that? Alright, we moving along.”

*If I get in trouble... Alright, a girl steps to me, it’s a big disagreement, we’re gonna argue. Alright, then he’s (the principal with the urging of the safety agent and sometimes the teacher) gonna come to me and suspend me for five days or suspend me until my mother come up? She has to work just like you (meaning the principal) do. So while I’m at home and my mother’s at work and you at work, I’m missing out on **my** work (emphasis hers). So why for every little thing that we do we have to get suspended?*

While students understood the need for limits and to have consequences for behavior, they also agreed that suspension from school is a very serious punishment. Because being suspended for even a few days can put you off track of your school work, they felt that this punishment should be used for very serious incidents and that arguing, even loudly, does not merit such a detour from academic pursuits. Although I had assumed that all suspensions were in-house, in this school, students were still being sent home for suspensions.

One student relayed a story about her principal having threatened to suspend students for the whole term for arguing in school or raising their voices in the hallway. Now, of course the possibility exists that the principal never made such a threat; however, these young people were not at all shy about disagreeing with each other when someone said something that was not entirely true, and in this case no protests were raised. They all agreed on the version of events as presented by this student. Again, the possibility

exists that they decided that the spirit of the story was close enough to what actually happened that the group went along with it. I will never know, but that is less important than noting that what really mattered to them was the **dilemma of linking academic work to behavioral infractions**, particularly if those infractions were perceived as being exaggerated by staff in the school.

Students were unanimous in their frustration that talking back to teachers will get you suspended, regardless of the disrespect with which some teachers handle students. This willingness to suspend young people, and not to have a forum to resolve student-teacher conflicts, sent a message to the youth with whom I spoke: The work they do as students is not taken as seriously as the work adults do in their jobs and careers. These were not young people norming to an “us versus them” mentality in the focus groups. They were clear that not every teacher or staff member would disrespect them. However, they, like the other Rockaway residents I had encountered, measured respect closely.

Students are not permitted to have cell phones and pagers in school; some believed this was because school officials thought students would be distracted by them, but a few students believed that instead the school assumed the only reason young people in the neighborhood would carry and use cell phones in school was for drug-related reasons:

Student 1: *I don't think they should take cell phones and beepers away. 'Cause after September 11, how are you supposed to get in touch with your parents?*

Student 2: *Nah, they think that's drug-related.*

The young people in the focus groups did not believe that they had adequate access to health care within their school – they reported not having a school nurse (in

fact, the Drama therapist confirmed that the nurse had been removed and now he occupied her office). Other students were frustrated by a lack of access to information about sexually transmitted diseases, about birth control (particularly a lack of easy and free access to condoms) and pregnancy, and services for youth with alcohol and drug addictions. Again, they point to evidence that in a very material sense, resources in the school are lacking.

For a few of the students interviewed, school is like a second home. One said:

I feel pretty safe, because the thought never really crosses my mind if I'm safe in school... I treat school as like a second home; I enjoy coming to school, I enjoy talking to my friends at school, you know with teachers, going to class, you know I feel really safe.

Another reason is I been through a lot of things... I used to do bad things, whatever. I was in and out of a lot of schools. When I came to this school, I just felt differently in school. You know, I just started to do the right things.

For others, of course, school is a less welcoming place, as this 17-year-old male student told us:

Some people are afraid to go to school because they think they're gonna get beat up or get their feelings hurt, so they don't go to school.

Asked what makes a school safe, one male student (typically) pointed to the neighborhood:

Um, maybe the environment... like the community that we in, if it's a bad community most likely its gonna be a bad school.

HOW SAFE ARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOODS?

When asked about safety concerns in their neighborhoods, the first issue on these young people's minds was drug sales. Linked closely with this are gangs, though some students saw this as a problem mainly for younger boys:

- Student 1 *All about it being popular now. Being in the gang is like the thing to do, but they don't realize that it is nothing but trouble. And being in a gang, it puts you aside from what you should be doing. Nowadays without college you can't do a lot. And being in a gang is gonna mess you up. Your friends will tell you, no, you need to be out here banging with us, but reality is that's not the thing to do, but they don't understand it.*
- Student 2 *A lot of people don't realize that what he's saying is true. Like when you at home, you don't want your mother on your back, you don't want your father on your back and if you're in a gang you already got the cops looking for you, you got the colors. I don't think it's a smart move to be in a gang because you don't want that attention.*
- Student 3 *They don't approach me. But all my friends, they're always approaching my friends. Like "play gangs"... they don't really know what it is to gang bang.*
- Student 4 *It's the little boys. It gets to the little boys' head; they try to act like big boys, they go drinking and smoking, some can't control they liquor. So they be on that Bloods shit, excuse me, Crips stuff.*

So although students reported that gangs were not a problem in their school, they did have experience of them in the neighborhood. These young people also live with a clear awareness that many teenagers have died in the Rockaways and associate those deaths with conflicts over territory for selling crack, not necessarily with gangs. This is behind much of the violence in their neighborhoods. In one of the groups, the question of whether there were gang killings led to this exchange among the students:

- Moderator *Do many teens get killed here by gangs?*

- Student 1 *Yes.*
- Student 2 *We lost a lot of teens.*
- Student 3 *I can't say by gangs.*
- Student 4 *I say it is by drugs.*
- Student 1 *Drugs and money. Don't sell on nobody else's block.
Don't come on nobody else turf trying to sell anything.*
- Student 5 *And I say money because you could owe a person like \$2.
He drunk, he see you, he remember you owe him \$2, like
"Yo, where my \$2 be?" Y'all start arguing, he bumping
into you, all that gonna lead to is fighting. I could be a
bystander.*
- Student 4 *I can't even say drugs, because it ain't weed, it's crack.*
- Student 5 *Coho, ecstasy, coke and dust.*

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Although the students I interviewed did not have the same “big picture” view of inequalities between neighborhoods as that presented in Chapter 2, they did understand that within the neighborhoods on the peninsula, many experienced fighting over what felt like a very small pie. During one of the focus groups, students expressed a hint of some of the class-based resentments and turf-related tensions that I had encountered informally among adults in the neighborhoods on the peninsula’s Eastern end. One young woman, who lived in a house owned by her family, articulated resentment against the people living in nearby public housing developments:

We need a community center with a pool. I don't understand why the projects get a community center and in houses (meaning people who live in properties that they own), people that pay taxes, get nothing but a school park.

A boy agreed with her and added that:

They [one of the housing developments] got an indoor gymnasium in the middle of they project where they be shooting out [in the past year, several incidents of gun violence had happened in this development] and stuff and we can't even get no mall or no restaurant in the 60s [meaning the Beach streets in the 60s]. They're one of the worst communities and yet they're getting the best things in the projects.

The moderator asked if this meant that the students felt that some people didn't deserve public goods like a gym; several students agreed that they saw it as a reward for bad behavior:

Hammels projects does not deserve that big gymnasium that they're building in the middle of the projects... Cause all they do is shoot every night. And they getting that big pool, tournaments in there and stuff; why we can't get it?

The girl who had initiated the conversation reiterated:

All we have is a community center; in every housing system, projects, whatever, have a community center. We need something different just like Hammels is getting something different... All that stuff is going to do is bring more tension and more killing. Basketball leads to shooting, no matter - I mean come on, everybody know that.

But the moderator wanted to know more about her theory. He asked if he thought it was guaranteed that violence would continue in this project. The young, black woman made the comment, to the black moderator that "niggers don't know how to act." This prompted a small uproar, both that the student had used the n-word in front of the drama teacher and I, but also that she was being unfair. The drama teacher asked for clarification: "Are you saying that only black people are having problems in the Rockaways?" The young woman who had thrown the n-word thought about it and said, in definitive tones:

It's not only the black people that's suffering, we have white people that live in our projects, that live in our neighborhoods, we have white friends, its not by the color of your skin, it's the community that you're living in.

Another young woman who lived in project housing, but not Hammels, did not object to the criticism of the housing development, but she did explain some of the

tensions that exist between some of the developments within walking distance of each other, raising the aforementioned issues of “turf”:

Especially ‘cause other projects is gonna come out they home to go to Hammels to play in they ‘hood, and then everything gonna pop up from there.

*Like they getting that gymnasium in Hammels. I live in Edgemere. If I feel, “Oh, I wanna go to the pool in Hammels,” I go to the pool in Hammels, a girl look at me wrong, or say something to me, it’s gonna start a big fight or whatever. It’s just I’m in **her** projects; it’s gonna be more trouble on me. So that’s why we need the same thing they’re getting in our projects so we could stay in our own projects and stay out of trouble (emphasis hers).*

This brought to the surface again the frustration of the young woman living in a house outside the projects, yet near enough to know and see the changes taking place:

Can housing please get some please? So I don’t have to go to the projects? ... Can housing – you know people that live in a house – can we get some stuff like that instead of in the projects all the time? ...we live in a house. Right? But we want a community center for ourselves.

When asked about activities, another student pointed out the competition for space that he encounters when visiting the local park with his younger siblings:

I have a little sister. I think they should have like bigger playgrounds and like sprinklers, something with water, because when it gets hot in the summer times they like to open up the hydrants a lot, but the police they come and close it down and then people get mad. So I think they should probably make swimming pools and stuff like that. We need more parks for the youth. The parks we have now are overcrowded. You go with your brother and there’s two swings and you gotta wait on line for two hours.

The students felt that their neighborhood was sorely lacking in general, beyond community centers. They know that, housing developments or not, there are few economic opportunities, as consumers or employees, in the area. Yet there was still a trace of resentment about fast food possibilities near projects:

(My neighborhood) got so many churches and houses. That's it. No pizza store. No McDonald's... Hammels get Popeye's. First they had KFC. Then they got Popeye's. Plus they got a restaurant.

This inspired a litany of all the stores that exist near the Hammels projects that had earlier been resented for being the scene of many shootings and deaths:

Student 1 *A supermarket.*
 Student 2 *Pizza.*
 Student 3 *Pizza parlor, a nail salon.*
 Student 4 *A check cashing place.*
 Student 2 *Ten dollar store, everything, everything over there!*
 Student 3 *Cell phone store.*
 Student 4 *We have to travel, we have to travel. Edgemere, we only have a Spanish restaurant and a supermarket and a laundry.*

What the students did not say was that these stores, and this housing development, are very close to two transportation hubs: the LIRR station as well as the A train station. They also did not mention that although there are a fair amount of shops near Hammels, the development is also quite near a barely functioning shopping complex that contained more empty storefronts than open businesses.

The real estate development taking place in the Rockaways was not lost on the youth in these interviews, but they saw their own needs being neglected while those of others (presumably none of whom were represented at the focus groups) were being filled. Their views echoed the opinions of countless adult residents with whom I had spoken over the years. In each of the focus groups, students expressed concern that the numerous empty lots in Rockaway were being filled with new housing – they were generally unable to see how new housing would improve their quality of life on the peninsula.

I'm part of a program that we're trying to find stuff for the Rockaways [I would later learn that she was in the Rockaway Youth Leadership Council], you know, like movies, malls, places that we could go to hang out, instead of them building all these houses, cause if you see every corner you turn they're building houses and everywhere you go they building houses – it's overcrowded with houses.

Another young woman added:

We have a lot of vacant lots. We need a mall, supermarkets, we need stuff like that, we don't need no more houses. They building a house on every lot.

In December 2000 the City had announced a request for proposals for Arverne-by-the-Sea, a planned residential community within the Arverne Urban Renewal Area. The groundbreaking ceremony took place in July 2002, but already in the preceding spring, local news and everyday conversations were peppered with criticism about further development on the peninsula. One student expressed her resentment of the new development this way:

You go on the balcony and what's your view? You see the welfare center and a train station.

Transportation, especially buses, was another problem that came up in discussion. These youth found the buses to be very unreliable and slow, and said that some bus drivers made it clear that they don't like high school students and won't stop for them. If true, this would present a serious problem in bad weather, given that only one bus line along the peninsula's length ran past this school:

There's one bus driver – he don't like school kids. He won't stop for us for nothing.

WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POLICE?

Students were asked about their interactions with police officers in their school and neighborhoods. Some of the students, particularly the young African American, black and Latino men had less to say about police in their schools than in their neighborhoods:

I like policemen until a certain extent but sometimes they do necessary stuff that's not necessary. Like for example, which I would say, I was coming home from a party, I'm sitting on the train, you know, my legs across the chair. The officer decided to take me off the train and give me a \$50 summons for having my feet on the chair. Plenty of times bums all the time sleeping on the train. I'm wide awake, my feet... and they decide to give me a summons, I think that's prejudiced.

Another student, emboldened by the previous critique, took it one step further to his experience of being treated as a suspect:

Yo, I think that yo, the cops, they grimy! 'Cause they'll slip stuff in your pocket! You's gotta watch them, 'cause they tried to slip this guy's social security card in my pocket. 'Cause he [the police officer] was checking me for drugs, but then my homeboy seen him, and he was like, "why you slipping that in his pocket?" And then I called my sister and yo, she offed on him [the officer], you shoulda been there guys! She offed on em, and we left, and they left. But he tried to slip the social security card in my pocket like I was a drug dealer or something! I go to school, y'all, you could check my attendance, I ain't no drug dealer.

A few students explained that they were aware of the "safe corridors" program funded by PRYSE, although they did not know it by that name. Rather, they knew that the potential for conflict increases when students leave the school at the end of the day. One said that the police are there:

...after school they're on the train making sure everybody being nice, orderly. We ain't gonna have a fight at school, because the security guards gonna catch us, and we're gonna get suspended or kicked out, so they might wait until they get on the train or something, so that's why the police are there to make sure everything goes straight on the way home.

I could not help but wonder, in this particular focus group, whether the students viewed the school safety agents (or security guards as the student above called them) as the extension of the Police Department. But in this case, students saw the agents as distinct from “real” police officers, and clarified for me when they would see police in the school; this included a critique of police failing to protect or at least look out for students in the school:

They [the police] only in our school when a fight is happening. They don't come to our school every other day to make sure everybody is OK. The only time they come is if they pick a student up for truancy – that's the only time they come to our school; they don't come to our school to check on us and make sure we are OK inside of the school. They don't do that.

I asked for clarification of the relationship between the local youth officers, whom I knew did go to the high school from time to time, and were the ones posted to the safe corridor after school. One young man agreed with me that he did have opportunities to get to know police officers at school, and that he saw them more often than for incidents to which they were called to respond:

We talk to them a lot, they talk to me, they ask me, “how things going?” Make sure everything's cool... they make me feel like... Before this, like the average teen, I didn't really like cops, but they made me feel different about them. More like... there are some cops out there that really care and that really want to make a difference.

FOCUS GROUPS – CONCLUSIONS

To reiterate, in the focus groups conducted, I found that young people in Rockaway shared many of the concerns of adults on the peninsula. As in the community survey conducted with adults, drug selling emerged as a major concern for youth and their safety. The students were unanimous in their view that much of the violence (which they called “fighting” as distinguished from “arguing”) in their neighborhoods was a direct result of two related issues: drugs (but *not* marijuana) and money. Yet there were concerns more prominent among them than safety, and their safety concerns were focused much more on their neighborhoods, and less on the inside of the school. Young people shared with adults the priority for after-school and recreational programs as sorely lacking needs for children and teens in Rockaway. These young people also believed that economic development, in the form of employment opportunities, would do much to change the shape of the community in which they lived.

Before leaving the focus groups, however, we will turn to a particularly important discussion that took place in all three: the relationship between students and school safety agents in their high school.

EXCURSUS: School Safety Agents as Street-Level Bureaucrats

Students in the focus groups were asked to talk about the safety agents in their schools. Recall that in 1998, the New York City Police Department became the first in the United States to assume control over security within the city's public schools, and within a few years had hired about 2,000 new police-trained and precinct-employed safety agents to swell the ranks of school peace officers to about 5,200 in all (NYCLU, et al., 2009, p. 11).¹⁴² School safety agents are distinguished from regular police officers in that they do not carry firearms. Even before this locally historic shift in direct control – which also amounted to enhanced mayoral power, in advance of the shift to full mayoral control of the schools system several years later – police officers already had been increasingly present within the walls of public schools in both the United States and Western Europe. This form of security collaboration is considered an extension of community policing, in New York City and elsewhere (as seen in Chapter 6).

In each group, reflecting a common concern of teenagers in the US, the youth mentioned their difficulties with issues of favoritism and consistency on the part of school safety agents. Students noticed and resented any perceived favoritism toward particular students, finding such behavior frustrating and confusing. Students agreed that because teachers could not and would not break up fights, safety agents had in their view become a “necessary” part of life in the school, but they would have preferred to see more consistent treatment of students across the board:

If some of them – I don't know – because it's like, they're like sometimes “with us.” They'll be cool with you; they'll try to be your age, but then like, if the principal come around, then they'll try to get strict. Or they

¹⁴² Numbers before then had been stable; the former Division of School Safety under the Board of Education had employed about 3,200 uniformed security officers as far back as 1992, according to Wacquant, 2001.

will let you cut in the cafeteria one day, and then the next day, they'll be like "no, get outta here" telling on you; that's not the way to do it.

A male student agreed with the female student above:

They need to do either, or – they need to be strict or they need to be cool. One day they'll be like laughing and playing with you, and then want to be all nice and the next minute they, "Oh go to class, give me your ID." The only thing they do is take your ID, and send you to study hall; when you in study hall, you're learning nothing. All you're doing is writing paragraphs.

Several students in each group complained that the safety agents did not actually add any value to their school experience; that is, they claimed the agents didn't really DO anything.

A few of the girls in each focus group objected openly to the presence of male safety agents in their high school because they saw them as occasional sexual predators on female students. In June 2002, I wrote a report about the focus groups for our Steering Committee, which I intended to submit to "the feds" as part of our mid-year report. It included this paragraph:

Several female students mentioned one major concern regarding Safety Agents. There have been many instances in the past year of agents in their high schools "rapping to" and (either trying to or actually) having sex with female students. Some male teachers have also behaved this way towards female students. The young women in these focus groups said that such situations put them in a terrible position, as they are afraid to tell other school staff, and believe that the adults around them are simply looking the other way.

When I made this report to the full Steering Committee at our June meeting, the members expressed great concern about this paragraph in particular. The representatives from the District Attorney's office and the school district wanted to know if the students had named any names, or if they might have fabricated these stories. I explained that the

students were told at the beginning of each focus group, in keeping with customary social science research practice, that they were being asked specifically **not** to identify people by their real names, and in fact, all of them also chose their own personal pseudonym for the focus groups. I assured them that the stories seemed genuine, had arisen spontaneously within each group and were not challenged by any of the other students in attendance (which had happened at other points during the focus groups when students seriously disagreed about an interpretation or comment offered about other issues raised). Various parties at the PRYSE meeting expressed great hesitancy about allowing this section of the report to be included in any public distribution of findings. It was a truly uncomfortable meeting. In the end the program manager, with the majority of the PRYSE Steering Committee, asked that I remove these references from the report before I submitted the final version to the federal government. The conversation itself was excluded from the meeting minutes. I reserved the right to distribute my original report, as it was written *with* the paragraph on concerns about sexual harassment, to the students who participated in the groups, as I had promised to send them each a summary of the focus groups when we were done.

To my knowledge, no further investigations into these youth concerns were pursued by our committee or any of its members, including me. By July 2002 I had edited my report so that this paragraph was removed for submission to “the feds.” I still look back on this incident as one in which I colluded with structure against my own will toward agency. But I sent out the original report, including the paragraph, to all the youth who had participated in the groups.

It was not until 2007 that media reports in the City began to focus on the lack of civic accountability for school safety agents, mostly because of the work of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU). Whereas a Civilian Complaint Review Board exists to address complaints against NYPD officers, neither the NYPD nor the Department of Education has any formal channels through which anyone – students, teachers, principals, parents – can address complaints against school safety officers.

The only empirical research that has directly addressed the behavior of New York City’s school safety agents was the project undertaken by the NYCLU in 2007.¹⁴³ In their report, “Criminalizing the Classroom: The Over-Policing of New York City Schools,” they mention some of the same findings I report. Despite my thorough review of academic and public policy literature, no quantitative analyses are currently available to assess the extent of reported (or unreported) inappropriate behavior on the part of school safety agents or student’s perception of the behavior. But in their qualitative interviews, the NYCLU reported that:

Students and teachers alike complain that male SSAs subject girls to inappropriate behavior, including flirting and sexual attention. Teachers, principals, and a former DOE official reported that SSAs are often not much older than the students they supervise and not firmly instructed about the impropriety of flirting with students. “SSAs have never been seriously told to knock off the attention that they give to the girls,” one former DOE official said. “If their supervisors just told them, ‘Don’t do it again,’ the SSAs would probably stop. But there is no reliable mechanism for reporting or disciplining SSAs involved in that kind of behavior.” (Mukherjee, 2007, p. 17).

¹⁴³ Although it should be noted that in 2001, the Vera Institute of Justice proposed a specialized training for school safety agents having been approached by the Board of Education and NYPD to facilitate a safety-planning process in Brooklyn. For details on the demonstration project, see Sareen, 2001.

Here the issue is not whether safety agents actually engage in sexual (or romantic) activity with students, as was claimed by the students I interviewed, but rather whether agents engage in any inappropriate behavior.¹⁴⁴

Despite this type of evidence, and despite the various concerns over direct NYPD control of school safety, many principals welcomed an increase in school safety agents in their schools. When I interviewed the CSD 27 liaison to PRYSE, Wayne G., in May 2002, just a few weeks after holding the focus groups, I asked for his perspective on safety agents, and specifically whether the principals with whom he worked still requested more safety agents, as had been expressed in the informal survey of principals PRYSE conducted in 2000. He said:

I don't think they ever feel... I think if they could put an agent every four square feet of a school, they would, because, I mean, even today there was an incident that... I think in Brooklyn... A Special Ed student put rat poison in a teacher's soda when the teacher walked out of the classroom. Yesterday. So safety? I don't think there can be too much safety. And some schools, you need it because safety is THE issue. In other schools, not so, but yeah, I don't think there can be enough safety agents.

Is that the only answer? No. It's not the only answer; that's dealing with the symptoms, you don't deal with the disease when you put agents in the school, which is behavioral issues and why kids are upset or rebellious or whatever and that's more complicated and long-term in trying to address.

Wayne G. clearly understood the agents as a “band aid” of sorts, but his first thought of safety regarded what was a truly unusual “incident.” Wayne G.’s example indicated a concern about the safety of teachers and administrators rather than students

¹⁴⁴ This is not to say that sexual crimes against students by safety agents are not of concern, but simply that for my purposes, the broader issue of making students feel uncomfortable in school relates directly to safety, although the Coalition did not necessarily concern itself with this version of “safety.”

and teachers are indisputably victimized by students in public schools.¹⁴⁵ However, the perpetuation of “rat poison” stories shores up demand for school safety agents despite the fact that they almost certainly could do nothing to prevent such an instance from occurring. It begs the question of how to get to the root causes of such a case. So I followed up by asking Wayne G. about the typical features and complexities of determining what constitutes an “incident” in a school, and whether he knew if it had become more typical for all four types¹⁴⁶ of incident reports to be filed since the introduction of school safety agents under NYPD command. He did not know the actual details of filing incident reports, but gave a good sense of the sweep of changes taking place at the schools:

Just within the last 12 months, there’s a whole revision as to how [incidents in schools are] reported because of accountability; in other words, two or three years ago, there were a lot of things that were not going reported because principals did not want, schools did not want their schools to look like “incident school of the city.” But I think there’s some mandatory reporting now that has to take place in terms of sexual harassment, child-on-child abuse, and physical.

So there’s much more accountability now; and then the computers have been a big help because now information is electronically sent to the police department or Central [i.e., the Department of Education]. There’s no lag time, so the computers have centralized it and the dispersion of that information is more universal and therefore hopefully all parties can address the incident more efficiently. I know they have tightened up on it.

In the months when I was putting together the student focus groups and later interviewed Wayne G., the major reorganization of the New York City system was being

¹⁴⁵ According to the National Center for Education Statistics Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2003, “Over the 5-year period from 1997 to 2001, teachers were the victims of approximately 1.3 million nonfatal crimes at school, including 817,000 thefts and 473,000 violent crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault)” (DeVoe, et al., 2003, p. 28). The rate of violent crime in urban schools that year was 28 per 1,000 teachers.

¹⁴⁶ As explained below, the four types of incident reports are those filed with (1) the school system, (2) the school safety office, (3) the police, and (4) the teacher’s union, the UFT.

prepared in the wake of mayoral acquisition of full control over public schools. Wayne G. had an understanding of the big picture in terms of changes in administration and the influence of the new focus on accountability. He was familiar with and advocated applying a corporate model to education, with accompanying technology in information management and processing. (After the merging of school districts into larger regions the next year saw him transferred away, he would eventually land in a position in data management for the new Department of Education.¹⁴⁷) He articulated the implementation of a CompStat-type model of management via eased communication among institutions. Although he was not privy to the fine details of the earlier takeover of school safety by the NYPD from the top, he acknowledged that the ongoing reform under Mayor Bloomberg had been prefigured and enabled by the NYPD's assumption of control over security with the CompStat model:

When the police department took over school safety [in 1998] that changed things; it's all about information. I mean the quality of the decisions that people make is a function of the quality of the information they get, so if they have really good information very fast, they're able to address the issue much quicker than they could in the past and that's just the way of the world right now and the Board of Ed has – it's becoming more a part of the way they do business, with attendance, with incident reporting, which they have to because they deal with a million, billion bits of information every day.

So how do you collect it, store it, look at it, review it quick and make decisions based on it? And the computers have helped a lot, as they should. It should have been done 15 years ago, but bureaucracies don't

¹⁴⁷ Wayne G.'s first position within the schools system had been as one of several "Health Coordinators." In his case, he disseminated information about HIV. From that experience he understood how the logic of interpreting populations using numbers worked: "Zip codes are like a very big deal.. if you give me your zip code, I can tell you a lot about your family and your way of thinking and again it's because of computers. Because I did HIV for the whole city and there was definitely a correlation between income and a whole bunch of stuff and I'm sure you know. Dysfunctional neighborhoods are dysfunctional in many, many ways: health, economics, decision making, incident reports..." While he was with PRYSE as the CSD 27 coordinator, his relationship with the elementary and middle schools involved in the project was more direct than with the high schools, because the high schools in New York City were then managed under a different entity (still within the BoE but with a separate administrative oversight).

*work that way; this is not American Airlines; we're not – it doesn't work that way. But it's getting better and I think because the Chancellor's there and he has a business background, a **financial** [his emphasis] background. He views the world with numbers and computers are part of how you do that effectively.*

So he's re-training educators to think more with a business model of assessment, evaluation and revision in what you're doing, and accountability. I think it's getting better. I just wish more people would use computers and use them as a tool and not look at them as a burden in their jobs. And I think you have a lot of people at the Board of Ed who – the younger people know, but the people over 40 or 50 they don't see it as an asset; they see it as a pain.

Among the six elements requiring attention at SS/HS funded sites, the federal program prioritized educational reform and safe school policies. But we have seen repeatedly how the PRYSE initiative had very little influence over these two areas because of the school district's resistance or reluctance to cooperate. For example, the mediation programs were intended to work as remedies for a punitive school environment; however, their presence within a school did not necessarily imply that school administration had wholeheartedly embraced the “teachable moment” philosophy emphasized by the mediation staff. Therefore I asked Wayne G. about how the reforms taking place in the school districts might directly address SS/HS priorities. He again related the question to the “business model” taking shape under the new chancellor and the creation of the Department of Education:

Reevaluation of security procedures, particularly now with the Chancellor looking for accountability, there's more of a business model, return on investment, ways to show productivity, looking at data as a— data driven models and activities, you know. Attendance, looking at— it's very quantitative now in terms of what works, why are you doing it, and should we spend more money doing it, so it's a very— it's a business model which some people seem to think it works much better and that's constant. Now, that's a big part of the Board of Ed; that system-wide change is like that.

Ironically, given where we started this section, the original calls for the NYPD to take over control of school safety were fueled by sex scandals in public schools, publicized by the New York *Daily News* in particular (see Mangan & Siemaszko, 1995 for an example). Once that control was transferred – and given that the NYPD under Mayor Giuliani had embraced “quality of life” policing in which police attention is concentrated on the lowest-level illegal activities, and definitions of illegal activities and behaviors were broadened, with a concomitant adoption of the CompStat version of accountability – the opportunity for *intensified management of populations by numbers generally* was also vastly increased in the schools.

In short, NYPD-supervised school safety agents brought with them a new type of accountability that changed the reporting of behavioral infractions in schools. These strategies reflect a technology of audit. Garland (1997) explains that a new rationality for the governance of crime has emerged; it is organized around economic forms of reasoning, in contrast to the social and legal forms that predominated for most of the 20th century. Those of us on the PRYSE School and Community Safety committee faced a learning curve as we struggled to understand how to gauge what was meant by “violence in schools.” My field notes from that time reveal the complexity of defining what is meant by an “incident” in terms of safety in public schools:

The Department of Education produces school report cards that list “incidents” but those are not necessarily police incidents – every school handles this differently. There are four ways to report incidents: you can file a Department of Education report, a school safety agent report, a police report and a UFT report. There can be between one and four reports for any one incident. If there is a police report, there will be a Department of Education report. If there is any incident there should always be a report made to the principal, who keeps those reports. What constitutes an “incident” is discretionary.

Although traditionally, discretion about behavioral infractions rested in the hands of the principal (or long ago, the teacher), the presence of law enforcement officers, representatives of the District Attorney’s office, and the NYPD-employed school safety officers effected a literal shift in that discretion.¹⁴⁸ These relatively new parties, in terms of the social landscape of the schools, also brought a new layer or position demanding a different type of accountability. Certainly, police were also linked to schools in the past, but their reach was greatly extended by their takeover of school safety agents. And again, “the number of police personnel in the schools has increased by 62 percent, from 3,200 to 5,200” in the decade since the NYPD took over (NYCLU, et al., 2009, p. 11).¹⁴⁹ The NYCLU report also states that schools with permanent metal detectors have a more intense police presence than other schools. Both Rockaway high schools had permanent metal detectors. In addition, the representatives from the District Attorney’s office brought an active expectation that they be included in “safety-related” concerns within the school building.

Oscar M. illustrated this expectation in relating a story about his frustration at being left out of the loop when a police “incident” occurred in the middle school in which he had an office. He was not told about the matter until after it was resolved by the NYPD. When I asked him about it several months later, he acknowledged that

¹⁴⁸ A 2006 NYC Public Schools Chancellor’s Regulation on Safety in the schools states that “The maintenance of safety and good order is the collective responsibility of all school staff, the New York City Police Department, the Department of Education’s Division of Student Safety and Prevention Services, parents, and students” (NYC Department of Education, 2006, page 1 of 9). In addition, “The principals and school safety agents (SSAs) shall consult and work cooperatively with each other on matters pertaining to school security. Toward that end, they shall promptly notify each other of incidents that occur on school property.” And finally, “Compliance with the procedures set forth in this regulation is mandatory. Failure to comply with these procedures may result in disciplinary action including dismissal from employment.”

¹⁴⁹ Meaning, 3,200 was the number of security agents under the old BoE Security Division, before they became NYPD personnel; and 2,000 were added since they became NYPD personnel.

sometimes he would only find about things that happened in the school long afterwards, but pointed out that even if police (or school staff) refused to include him in police-related activities while he was at the school, his office would afford him access to all the information after the fact. And he wielded considerable power to act whenever he did know about an incident, simply by virtue of his institutional role (although again, he is neither a police officer nor an attorney). Recall the story (Chapter 6) about how he directed the principal to “lock down the school” for a weapons sweep:

And they found this large steak knife on [a student]. And as a result of that we had to lock down the school. And it was School Safety, the principal and every single teacher that was available: we did a weapons sweep. We swept the whole school in terms of looking for weapons. We went everywhere. I participated in that.

At one point the PRYSE Community and School Safety committee met with a school safety supervisor from Springfield Gardens High School¹⁵⁰ – in Queens, but not on the Rockaway peninsula – along with one of the Rockaway police precinct’s youth officers, who had been active in PRYSE. They were invited by the chair to gain some perspective on what they saw as safety challenges in schools in general. Interestingly, they all agreed that gang activity was not a big problem for Rockaway schools, as the students in the focus groups had also said. The adults saw “getting students to focus” as the biggest challenge. But the youth officer was surprisingly critical of the in-school suspension policy, echoing the students’ complaints about wasted time and an absence of value gained from the punishment; if indeed it acted as a punishment at all. He was frustrated that even with in-school suspensions, the environment created was never one that permitted examination, by adults and even less so by youth, of what behavior or

¹⁵⁰ Springfield Gardens High School was closed due to poor performance in 2007 and converted into four schools within the same building.

perception led them to suspension and the reasons behind that behavior. He wanted to think of other ways to address school safety, and he wanted to have opportunities to separate the student from their behavior (he had also expressed this view to me separately in an interview later that year, related in Chapter 4). As one of the most experienced youth officers I encountered during the years of PRYSE, he was most vocal about what I came to see as a *modified social work* view of his position.

By contrast, the school safety supervisor had no such vision of himself. He explained that he had been attending meetings of late to discuss new ID cards for students to improve school safety. In New York City, public schools contracted for an ID tracking program beginning in 2001. A company called Access411 created what they call the “Comprehensive Attendance Administration and Security System” or CAASS. Their marketing materials explain that CAASS

Provides access-control and attendance collection to schools across the nation. CAASS incorporates today’s technologies with best practices to create a **safer learning environment**. Not only does CAASS inflict accountability on students it allows more time for school administrators and teachers to focus on educating rather than [sic] policing (Access411, Inc, 2010a, para. 1, emphasis in original).

The safety supervisor was excited about the new cards, as they would have chips in them to permit monitoring of the possessor’s whereabouts via satellite. He said that school safety is always concerned about tracking students’ locations, and this would make a difficult job easier. As of 2010, the new IDs were not yet issued, and thus not yet in use to “inflict” accountability, but contracts for them had been signed with the Department of Education (Access411, 2010b).

I asked the school safety supervisor to reflect on the transition from working under the Board of Education to the NYPD, as he had experienced this shift. He likened supervision by the NYPD to understanding what martial law might be like. Before the Police Department takeover of school security, if someone had not shown up for work as a safety agent, well, they had a day off. But with the NYPD, “if you don’t come to work, they come to your house.” He said the tenor of this relationship could also be felt between the school safety agents and the students.¹⁵¹

Structural Roots, Individual Band-Aids, and a Culture of Control

By the early 2000s, the changes nationwide in policy around school safety and youth violence were interwoven with the movement towards standards-based education reform; the latter found its most complete institutionalization at the federal level to date in 2002 via George W. Bush’s signing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. NCLB promotes “standardized testing, accountability, competition, school choice, and privatization” (Hursh, 2007, p. 494). As with policies regarding youth violence, education reform policy was crafted within a neoliberal political context. The move toward what was called standards-based or outcome-based education had begun long before, under the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, when “the

¹⁵¹ By the end of the same meeting, the group, mostly at the urging of Tom H. from the mediation group, had come to the conclusion that having some sort of resource summit or information sharing workshops would be useful to head off what everyone was concerned would be a potential vacuum after PRYSE funding ended. Although everyone acknowledged that the existing programs of the time were inadequate, there was concern that having built some momentum toward creating a “safety net” around young people in the Rockaways, the end of PRYSE funding would mean undoing what had already been done. Although we searched for funding for a “safety summit,” we were unsuccessful, and it never came to pass. Unfortunately, the youth officer who was present, the one who had thought outside the box, would soon be promoted to an administrative position at One Police Plaza. Although youth officers after him were also committed to PRYSE, none would be as vocal about the need to separate the youth as a person from the things they did to disrupt the lives of those around them.

terms of the national discourse shifted from educational opportunity and equity to educational excellence” (McDonnell, 2005, p. 25).¹⁵² By the mid- to late-1990s, state governors were playing a more important role in steering education policy and forming coalitions with business and religious leaders (Gittell & McKenna, 1999).

Stretching back to the 1980s, a number of social science researchers, the media, and more than a few politicians painted the picture of an “epidemic of youth violence in the United States” (see Cook & Laub, 2002). There was an increase in shooting deaths of juveniles by 412 percent during the period from 1984 to 1994 (homicide statistics being among the most reliable of crime statistics), and these homicides were concentrated among the “urban young black male population” (Feld, 1999, p. 25). The availability and use of firearms are the proximate cause of the increase (again, see Feld, 1999 for a detailed analysis). While this increase did cause great fear, calling it an epidemic is misleading. The findings of Feld (1999) regarding the relationship between availability of firearms and homicides among youth indicate that youth violence in the United States is a systemic problem, linked to factors far beyond a neighborhood in this case. It should also be noted that youth violence and school violence are separate and distinct.

Following Casella (2002), my intention here has been to move “beyond standard site-based ethnography and [bring] a global perspective involving theory and policy to local happenings” (p. 352), including both structural and cultural interpretations of the school violence reduction strategies in Rockaway. Casella’s ethnographic research, conducted at a high school in a mid-size city in New York state, highlights some of the

¹⁵² Although Reagan’s clear preference was for a smaller federal government with less federal involvement in education at the local level – to the point of making an (unkept) 1980 campaign promise to abolish the federal Department of Education altogether – in office, he used his bully pulpit to call on state and local actors to “raise standards” for public school students (McDonnell, 2005, p. 25). The commission report released in 1983, *A Nation at Risk*, has ever since been a focal point in the argument for higher standards.

same strategies of violence prevention that played out in the Rockaways cases that I participated in as an evaluator. Casella concluded that community-based collaborations focused on school violence were “at once liberatory and oppressive.” They increased participation of community residents and stakeholders, but also showed the potential to reinforce racism; they acknowledged structural explanations of violence, even as they simultaneously pursued funded projects that were not equipped to deal with structural issues.

What is actually being accomplished by funded programs that bring criminal justice institutions into more intimate contact with public schools? With the development of justice and policing strategies (community-based and otherwise) and their application to schools, schools in low-income areas, especially black and Latino neighborhoods, have become the site, and sometimes the laboratory, for the articulation of criminal justice policies (see Nolan, 2009). In the confluence of ideologies currently applied to such public schools, the familiar (neoliberal) business-based models of “efficiency” and “customer service” and “outcomes” measured by way of standardized tests now interweave with a set of *criminologies* – meaning *approaches to crime* – that reflect what Garland (2001) calls the “culture of control.” Nolan sees in it a combination of “populist conservatism and cost-conscious neoliberalism” (Nolan, 2009, p. 41). This shift has accompanied the model of policing first practiced in New York City and then held up as a model for the nation: order-maintenance policing, publicly promoted as “quality of life” policing and tracing its roots in part to the “Broken Windows” perspective articulated by Wilson and Kelling (1982). How all this has played out in New York City public schools has been the topic of the various research projects from the New York Civil Liberties

Union as well as academic scholarship (for eloquent summaries, see Mukherjee, 2007, and Giroux, 2009). Their findings confirm the dramatic increase in suspensions (both in-school and out-of-school) as well as “a whole population of urban students who are... ‘learning to do time’” (Nolan & Anyon, 2004, as quoted by Nolan, 2009, p. 44). Signs are emerging that these combined developments are widely being acknowledged as excessive, if not fundamentally flawed.

Alternatives to Governing Through Crime

A central, albeit underlying, argument of this dissertation is that the CCIs in which I participated often emulated not the “War on Poverty” programs that they resemble on the surface, but rather the strategies of the “War on Crime.” On the surface, the SS/HS initiative as implemented in Rockaway brought together more representatives from non-criminal justice agencies than anyone else, but lacked a strong, diverse component representing community residents. Although a “law and order” mentality did not clearly predominate at Coalition meetings, criminal justice agencies were positioned to work more directly (with more of their programs focused on youth) and intimately (by being placed in schools, alongside social workers and mediators) with youth than before the initiative. Socializing youth to become part of their institutions, they at the same time denied the possibility for youth to question, influence or even change those institutions. In addition, criminal justice agencies had the authority to leave the table to pursue their own agendas with little or no consequence beyond partner resentment. This was also more generally true: the other partner organizations also remained committed to the strategies and values of their respective institutions. But without an opportunity or

process to promote organizational change and unity among the partners before the initiative ever began, to build a true coalition and reconcile its disparate elements, the agencies that are most used to occupying an authoritative position in the institutional realm also did so in this case. The QDA and NYPD representatives were committed to improving the life of young people in the Rockaways; however, their organizational values, so reliant on reactivity, were not really altered.

Although the SS/HS program originally was motivated in reaction to heinous acts of school violence, we were focused on creating safe schools and healthy students. We were almost powerless to influence the schools involved in our work. The two high schools on the peninsula that had been included in the project have since been closed and are being reconfigured as smaller “educational campuses” within the same buildings. One of those schools had received citywide publicity as it was named among the most dangerous schools in the city by Mayor Bloomberg in 2004, in the same year that the city launched the “Impact Schools,” upholding the spirit of schools “governing through crime,” as Simon (2007) put it. At that school and 21 others, Bloomberg’s initiative sought to apply the same broken windows approach to schools that Giuliani had applied to low-income, black and Latino neighborhoods: using a CompStat-type program, NYPD and Department of Education would increase police presence and law enforcement strategies to increase compliance with the school Code of Discipline. The Drum Major Institute (2005) review of the 22 “Impact Schools” from 2004 to 2005 found that although they did share higher levels of police incidents and other negative indicators such as transfers due to safety concerns, the schools, relative to the average city high school, also shared:

- More students over-age for their grade;
- A more heavily poor and Black student population;
- Less per capita spending on direct services to students and a smaller increase in this spending;
- A much larger student body;
- An increase in overcrowding even as city high schools overall saw less crowded conditions (Drum Major Institute, 2005).

The question naturally arises as to why these conditions, especially the kind that money very clearly could change, like lower per-capita spending on services and overcrowding, are not addressed as possible solutions (also to the safety concerns) prior to the imposition of experimental and even more draconian in-school policing strategies; perhaps beginning by diverting the funds that go into programs like Impact Schools.

By contrast, the aforementioned July 2009 report from the New York Civil Liberties Union, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, and Make the Road New York documents six very successfully safe high schools in New York City that do not implement different policing strategies from the rest of the schools to achieve their goals. The study found that policies concentrating on “mutual respect, an expectation of self-discipline and proportional responses to rule breaking” characterized these schools (p. 43). None of the six successful schools used metal detectors, and all served populations of students similar to those enrolled in Impact Schools, though it is worth noting that the schools deemed successful in the report were majority Latino student schools, whereas Impact Schools are about equally serving Black and Latino students (58% of students at Successful Schools were Latino; in Impact schools, 42% were Black and 41.4% Latino in 2006-2007). The report strongly recommends restoring disciplinary authority and responsibility to educators; *reducing* the number of school safety agents; including students in the implementation of school rules; and making sure

that all disciplinary procedures are transparent and that clear lines of accountability are visible. Although these schools were selected because they are already successful in producing a high-quality learning environment as well as a safe place in which to secure a high school education, nonetheless they have managed to reach students in neighborhoods quite similar to those that, like Rockaway, are often underserved and over-policed.

A counter-movement to “governing through crime” appears to be emerging. In March of 2010, the House of Representatives approved the “Keeping All Students Safe Act” by a vote of 262 to 153. The legislation is aimed at protecting children from inappropriate uses of disciplinary practices in schools. More precisely, the legislation was crafted after a 2009 report by the Government Accountability Office detailed a lack of federal policy regarding “restraint and seclusion” in schools, prompted by findings of alleged abuse and death due to physical restraint and seclusion (Kutz, 2009 reviews ten case studies of children killed or seriously injured by teachers or other school staff).

In New York, the NYCLU sued the City in January 2010 on behalf of all public school students, challenging “the unconstitutional policies and practices of the NYPD School Safety Division” (NYCLU, 2010, para. 1). One of the suit’s aims is to bring forth from the NYPD to the public domain a level of detail about arrests in public schools that is currently lacking, thereby creating more transparency of the activities of school safety agents. As named plaintiffs the suit was brought by five students on behalf of “all similarly situated middle and high school students in New York City public schools” (para. 1.).

In addition, starting in 2009 the NYCLU urged the City Council to adopt the Student Safety Act, which would “would require the New York Police Department and the Department of Education to give City Council a detailed report on school-safety issues every three months,” including information on arrests, expulsion and suspension of students (Schoenberger, 2009, para. 2). The data would also be detailed by race, ethnicity and gender. Introduced by Democrat Robert Jackson, the City Council member representing Washington Heights and chair of the Council’s Education Committee, the campaign in support of the bill has been organized under the Student Safety Coalition (a group of about 19 non-profit and advocacy groups in New York City), formed in 2007. The Act passed the City Council in December 2010 and will formalize “reporting on police and safety officer actions in relation to school safety incidents” (Zelon, 2010, para. 18).

This success of the Student Safety Coalition gives evidence that political action can counter “governing through crime.” The six schools documented by the NYCLU et al. report show that viable alternatives are in operation, allowing comparison and choice. If “what works” is truly what matters in the evaluation-driven world of CCIs and government social programming, these alternatives would come to set the guidelines for initiatives working for safe schools and healthy students. But given the many constraints on the reigning models for funded initiatives and the governmental community partnership offers we have studied here, and which are reviewed a final time in the following, concluding chapter, we may rightly wonder if CCI-type initiatives still have the potential to produce workable, positive change in communities and in schools, rather than acting as adjuncts or reinforcements to the “culture of control.” To address that

question, we turn to the politics of knowledge as well as the paradigms embedded in the CCI model.

Your (PRYSE) evaluation was focused on community change – on the opinions and perspectives of people living in the community – and that may not be the right focus. Are you the right evaluators?

(Brenda Z., personal communication, 2004)

CHAPTER 8

Evaluation Politics, Political Capital, and Paths to Community Change

As should be evident by now, even very small-scale CCIs can be highly complex. Given also the goal of promoting an arguably elusive “community change,” it is unsurprising that attempts to amass knowledge from such initiatives are notoriously challenging. The question of methods in evaluation is important not only because we want our efforts to inform practice, but also because of the weight with which evaluations are perceived. Federal spending priorities across a widening range of programs are decided based on the supposedly scientific evidence produced via evaluation. Widely regarded as a sensitive and thorny issue, evaluation brings with it the strong potential – depending on the context as well as the evaluators and their approach – to be seen by funders, program managers, funded program staff, social service recipients and residents of “target” areas as a potential threat (to identity, autonomy, legitimacy, and funding).

Evaluation is also at times perceived as a chore, as a potential ally or enemy, and at the very least as a tool in political struggles.

This concluding chapter first considers the major debates in evaluation: the persistent faith in a quantitative experimental “gold standard” in opposition to the continued necessity (and also the desirability) of qualitative methods; debates over which levels of analysis are appropriate for which questions, from community or even structure to the individual; and the politics and tensions inherent in the relationships between program managers, partners, and evaluators, not to mention funders. The case of PRYSE and especially the reaction to its Final Evaluation Report in 2004 is studied for how it enacted all of these debates. Then we turn to findings from broad-ranging, longer-term studies of Safe Schools/Healthy Students and CCIs generally, with a look at if and how these findings are being applied in current new initiatives, such as the federal Promise Neighborhoods program. There follows an analysis of what paths to community change really appear the most promising, and, finally, a summary of the author’s conclusions from the PRYSE case and a series of recommendations for the future.

Evaluation and Evidence

Peter H. Rossi, whose work on evaluation research made him an internationally recognized expert, wrote in 1984 with his colleague James D. Wright that evaluation had crested and was in decline as a profession. Beginning with Johnson’s “War on Poverty” and Great Society programs, laws were crafted that mandated evaluations as an integral part of social programming (Leeuw, 2009). Rossi and Wright characterized the 1960s and 1970s as the “Golden Age” of evaluation research, dating the end of that age to the

early 1980s when the Reagan administration dismantled social programs and effected drastic cuts in the amount of federal money available for social research, including evaluations (p. 331). Nonetheless, “evaluation research [had] become part of the tools of government, especially on the federal level” (p. 350). Rossi predicted, rightly, that the field would continue to employ evaluators trained in social science research methods.

Belying notions of decline (at least quantitatively), by the turn of the century “the federal government was spending about \$200 million annually on evaluating \$400 billion in domestic programs, and the 30 major federal agencies had between them 200 distinct evaluation units” (Boruch, 1997 as cited in Schutt, 2009, p. 396). Today, just as evaluation or “performance measurement” is nearly ubiquitous in the philanthropic world, it is also required of all government-funded CCIs. For example, Safe Schools/Healthy Students sites must hire professional evaluators and, currently, devote no less than 7 percent of their overall budget to local evaluation activity. In 2006, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) launched “ExpectMore.gov,” an online project to publish assessments derived from the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). An October 2009 memo from the OMB director detailed plans for the FY 2011 budget to include “increased emphasis on program evaluations,” including an interagency working group, more availability of evaluation results online, and funding to agencies that partner in devising new evaluations of their activities (Orszag, 2009, p. 1).¹⁵³ The Obama administration has come to see PART as an important complement to this intensified program evaluation (Office of Management and Budget, 2010). Along with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA, first passed in 1993 and updated

¹⁵³ The FY 2011 Budget allocated about \$100 million to 17 federal agencies that submitted requests for funding new evaluations or strengthening their capacity to conduct such evaluations (Office of Management and Budget, 2010).

in December 2010), PART is considered to be a manifestation of the federal government's emphasis on “performance management” (Gueorguieva, et al., 2009, p. 225).¹⁵⁴ Currently, SS/HS grantees are directed to attend to GPRA requirements in both, their local evaluation and their participation in the national evaluation meant to supplement indicators collected through GPRA (National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, 2010, para. 1). In short, the “accountability movement” is fully entrenched in SS/HS in particular and in partnership-focused social programming in general, and almost always concerned with measurable outcomes and results, while simultaneously expecting long-term, community-wide changes (Carman, 2010).

For many years, evaluation research relied heavily upon experimental and quasi-experimental methods, because professional evaluation is oriented toward determining the “effectiveness” of funded programs and projects and so typically embraces positivist and post-positivist social research philosophies and quantitative methods. In this philosophical tradition, the experimental design is the “gold standard” for distinguishing the effects of treatments, interventions and programs (Eccles & Templeton, 2002, p. 116). Despite at least half a century’s critique of logical positivism, the development of post-positivist or post-empirical meta-theories, a wealth of scholarship on qualitative and interpretive research approaches, and the growth of the sociology of scientific knowledge, the quantitative paradigm still carries great weight not only within political circles but with the general public and in academic fields. But true and even quasi-experimental designs are often infeasible to conduct with real-life social programs and

¹⁵⁴ The GPRA “was put into operation in 1997 and requires federal agencies to develop strategic plans, annual performance plans, and performance reports. The GPRA was one of several preceding efforts to link performance to budgeting since the 1950s” (Gueorguieva, et al., 2009, p. 226).

public policies; they are expensive as well as difficult to implement (Eccles & Templeton, 2002). In a 2009 critique of the “evidence-based model” institutionalized in policy and research priorities by the United States and other Western industrialized nations, Denzin remarks that “indeed, within the evidence-based community there is the understanding that qualitative research does not count as research unless it is embedded in a randomized control trial (RCT)!” (p. 140). Although Denzin may overstate the case somewhat, the fact remains that much of the evaluation literature on CCIs contains a hint of apology for the widespread use of quasi-experimental design, and more than a hint of it for qualitative design, with researchers anticipating the critique that their research is less than “scientific” and therefore lacks “quality” (Association for the Study and Development of Community, 2001; Denzin, 2009).

The positivist and post-positivist traditions assume that rigorous social science, determining empirical facts, is a process apart from the evaluation of facts as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Weber, 1949, as cited in Schutt, 2009, p. 90). But what distinguishes evaluation research is precisely the *implication of values* in social science. More contemporary evaluation specialists such as Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) emphasize an “extended definition of evaluation” meant to capture some of the most important values they see as necessary for a free and democratic nation: “Evaluation is the systematic assessment of an object’s merit, worth, probity, feasibility, safety, significance, and/or equity” (p. 13). This definition of program evaluation is much more commonly accepted today; the debate on qualitative versus quantitative methodology, heated in the 1970s and 1980s, has on the surface moved into more of a “respectful coexistence,” although arguments persist (Greene & Henry, 2004, p. 350). However, the

federal government, particularly through requiring “scientifically based research” (quantitative research utilizing true experiments) in programs such as No Child Left Behind, continues to emphasize the old gold standard, leading some to conclude that the peace in the methods debate is at best uneasy (Donaldson & Christie, 2004).

In practice, the very nature of the CCI framework often dictates that the gold standard cannot be applied; these initiatives are by definition “big and messy” (Weitzman, et al., 2009, p. 496). But again, the norms of quantitative research are institutionalized and taken for granted without articulation, least of all by the majority of evaluation researchers themselves. The expectation that partnerships funded by federal money will provide a particular kind of evidence (based on a medical model reliant on the logic of prediction) of “what works” is widespread and potentially counterproductive for evaluators, politicians, and most of all, for the people living and working in the places in which such partnerships are implemented (Biesta, 2007; Denzin, 2009). Even those working on CCIs in the federal government have come to acknowledge that quantitative indicators will not deliver needed information on “capacity building or systems change,” especially because of the short-term nature of most federal funding of CCIs (Federal Partnership Project, 2008). Nonetheless, the focus persists on sophisticated quantitative evidence of the kind that only highly trained social researchers could produce.

Dilemmas of Evaluation and Stakeholder Expectations

In 1984, Rossi and Wright saw that major non-experimental evaluations faced great controversy for the “political implications of findings, but often centering on the alleged technical inadequacies of the designs employed” (p. 345). This enactment of

political conflicts through the proxy of arguments over evaluation is unlikely to disappear from policy debates; it certainly mattered even to the very small-scale evaluation on which I worked in Rockaway.

Now, in the third decade since CCIs were first conceptualized as a strategy toward poverty amelioration, academics, practitioners and participants have come widely to agree that determining initiatives' accomplishments and evaluating their successes are difficult and not without intellectual and political debate (Torjman and Leviten-Reid, 2003; Weitzman, et al., 2009). Articulating accomplishments in the short term of initiatives designed to promote long-term effects is a known challenge; for instance, some of the evidence of the social programs implemented during the War on Poverty would not emerge until Nixon was president (Leeuw, 2009). Another layer of challenge emerges in determining whether any changes that occurred during a CCI were actually the changes intended at the outset, and actually due to the CCI's activities. Even the best experimental design may not capture all factors contributing to change in a community, particularly in the long term. In addition, and of particular importance to sociologists, is the need to distinguish between change at the community level and change at the level of individuals.

Politics add to the challenge of evaluation research and often encourage the prioritization of the quantitative methods thought always to give higher "quality," and to allow direct comparisons of programs and measures. Recent research about evaluation practicalities encompasses a variety of understandings of "politics," a category ranging from matters such as the loss of control over the results of one's research to the volatility of research, the contemporary (neoliberal) "rage for accountability" in educational and

other policy-related research, and methodological battles for legitimacy and claims to “truth” in research (Banner, 1974; Barton, 2002; Lather, 2006).¹⁵⁵

Back in 1983, Browne and Wildavsky, in a revision to Pressman and Wildavsky’s now-famous study of federal policy implementation in Oakland, were more explicit about the issue of power in their observation that “the closer evaluators come to program managers, the greater the temptation of evaluators to fudge the results” (p. 183). These scholars were warning against evaluators being pushed to prioritize the *utilization* of results above all other goals for evaluation, but the observation still resonates more generally when considering the challenging political position into which evaluation is put in a policy context that replaces implementation (and the resources for it) with evaluation as the primary accountability mechanism.

Brenda Z.’s question, quoted at the start of this chapter, was idiosyncratic to our situation at PRYSE: being the “right” evaluators in the eyes of the PRYSE project manager in part meant whether we had delivered the kind of results that would allow the project’s funded partners to toast their success and, more importantly, to secure future funding. The question of actual community-level impact was obscured by the quest for funding. While this was just one evaluation of one site during a fixed (and relatively short) period of time, Brenda’s question is emblematic of the evaluator’s dilemma, which is often a “set up” (Michelle Fine, personal communication, 2000): to provide highly sophisticated, reliable and valid information on programs and their outcomes that will also persuade potential funders, and say nothing too critical that might compromise the

¹⁵⁵ Here I refer to the politics of and faced by evaluators working as consultants, either as independent contractors, in for-profit research corporations, or in university and college settings; and not to evaluators working in the direct employ of federal government at the Government Accountability Office (GAO), but for an interesting insider perspective on evaluation at the GAO, see Chelimsky, 2007.

view of current or future funders of these same programs, not to mention anything critical of the implementation.

At the federal level, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students administrators were aware that “evidence” does not always come neatly packaged, even that “evidence-based programs” may not always be the best strategy for addressing a local problem. As one of those administrators told me in an April 2004 interview, the federal SS/HS team was committed to funding and supporting programs nationwide that were not “standard,” not prefabricated units out of a box; in her view, the team had decided that, “the homegrown programs are more interesting.” But she added that the federal officers wanted to see the local people who had developed these homegrown programs go “from service to science” and to see them learn to “make their own evidence and become culturally competent.” Going from “service to science” favors those whom Taylor (2003, p. 229) calls the “most articulate and committee-literate” participants, unless there is also access to intensive education or training and attendant resources for those not as literate or articulate. Priority must be given to increasing the local cultural capital, but also to expand our definition of evidence beyond that produced exclusively through quantitative method; perhaps *rigor* is the best standard.

Cultural competence of this kind may have paid off for people in other SS/HS sites; homegrown programs that succeeded at reducing youth violence may have been created, and the crafters of those programs may have learned to measure them, or at least found funding to pay someone to do so, thereby producing sustainability. But the dynamic at our site was that people from organizations who already had cultural capital accumulated a little more; for example Brenda Z. and others were further

professionalized into the federal grant-making realm. Some, like Brenda, would go on to use their capital on other projects in other places. The “cultural competence” of coming to accept as necessary the “evidence-based practice” that the SS/HS administrator referred to came relatively easily to someone in Brenda Z.’s position. She was a step removed from being a true street-level bureaucrat because, by this stage in her accomplished career in social work and non-profit organizations, she mainly administered services and managed employees rather than worked directly with clients. But even given Brenda’s structural advantage, it took four years before she had accumulated enough of the federal accountability order’s cultural competence to feel confident in issuing the ruling that our evaluation had not measured up.

Reverend Cassius, at the other pole (at least among the professionals), was adamant by the end of PRYSE that people like me could not measure people like him (recall from Chapter 5 that he said directly at one of our Healthy Communities project meetings that, “Michelle cannot measure us,”) and actively advocated against such measurement, even knowing that it might mean fewer (however short-term) funding sources at his disposal.

In turning to the PRYSE Final Evaluation of 2004 as an object of analysis, and then to national evaluation studies of SS/HS and CCIs generally, let us put aside for the moment whether Brenda Z.’s question about whether we were the “right” team for the project at hand was fair or not, and keep in mind that it seizes at least three important tensions or concerns that reside in the relationship between evaluators and stakeholders in CCIs:

- 1) Differing expectations among CCI stakeholders for the evaluation;

- 2) The complexity of the political environment in which CCIIs operate; and
- 3) The challenges of designing evaluations for coalitions working on both programmatic and community change goals in an ideally synergistic relationship (Association for the Study and Development of Community, 2001; Federal Partnership Project, 2008; Torjman & Leviten-Reid, 2003).

Project Manager and Evaluator: Two Critiques of the Final PRYSE Evaluation

The Baruch College Local Evaluation Team released its final evaluation report on the PRYSE initiative in February 2004, with three aims in mind: to satisfy the federal requirement that the Coalition's work be summarized at the end of the funding period; to offer feedback to Coalition participants and peninsula residents on the accomplishments of the initiative's funded and unfunded programs; and to create a tool that the Coalition could use in seeking continued funding (ever-mindful of the federal orientation toward sustainability that those of us participating in the Coalition had embraced). The Evaluation Team had, from the outset, taken a long view of community change, and had assumed that community-level indicators would be the most appropriate for the final report on the coalition's efforts, given its mission and vision. It was this community-level focus that ultimately disappointed the project manager.

Our report was sent to a wide audience: to the SS/HS federal program officers; to anyone who had ever participated in the Coalition by attending a public meeting and signing in; to local, city and state politicians; as well as to two large city papers and the local paper. The report was also presented and distributed at a community meeting in February 2004. What follows is an excerpt from the executive summary, which

employed statistically significant findings from the three-year community survey, data we aggregated from “population served worksheets” that we collected every six months from all of the funded partners of the project, and aggregate data from the NYPD:

From June 2000 to May 2003, the PRYSE project has benefited on average over 10,000 children and families per year. Services include after-school recreational and tutorial programs, summer youth employment, recreational and academic activities, school-based peer mediation, school-based mental health services, pre-employment training for students, and early childhood training for parents and caregivers.

Encouraging trends in the community since the start of PRYSE include:

- A drop in crime along with an increasing sense of improvement in the problems of youth violence and substance abuse,
- An increase in the percentage of children and teens involved in after-school and summer programs,
- An increase in parental involvement in the public schools,
- \$3.4 million in new grants for the Rockaways, leveraged by the work of the PRYSE Steering Committee, and
- A coalition of community residents and leaders, service providers, educators, and law enforcement personnel working collaboratively on solving community problems.

A number of challenges remain, in particular finding the means to sustain the services and gains achieved by PRYSE (Van Ryzin, Weikart and Ronda, 2004, p. 1).

These highlights were true and given honestly, and made what we thought was our best effort to emphasize the Coalition’s most compelling accomplishments over four years’ time. However, before relating Brenda’s critique, it is instructive first to unpack how the two key figures given above were generated:

First, the \$3.4 million in new grants leveraged via PRYSE was in reality a cumulative figure for grants gained by PRYSE partners during the four years of the project. It included the \$2.5 million in federal HCAP funds secured for the Rockaway Health Alliance (covered in Chapter 5) as though RHA were simply an extension of

PRYSE, and not a new initiative launched and managed through the same department of the Family Health Clinic (Brenda's and Maggie's) that had also overseen the PRYSE grant application. Some of the other monies accounted as leveraged by PRYSE came from the New York State Department of Juvenile Justice (also going to the Family Health Center, to fund work with incarcerated juveniles with a history of substance abuse), New York City Housing Authority, JP Morgan Chase (this also went to the Health Center, for a credentialing training) and the Children's Aid Society (which sent people to Baruch to work with youth on training in substance abuse prevention). While these funds went to PRYSE partners during the initiative's life, it is by no means clear that the grants would not have been gained if PRYSE had not existed. The FHC freely presented grants to its mental health department as achievements of PRYSE, and where Brenda's PRYSE work ended and her non-PRYSE work for FHC began was subject to flexible definition.¹⁵⁶ At any rate, while the degree to which these funds were leveraged through PRYSE can be debated, they were not leveraged *for* PRYSE, and thus did not go toward addressing the initiative's sustainability problem, even if they were supporting programs generally related to the Coalition's mission.

Second, the average of 10,000 children and families served in each year of the project conceals a significant but indeterminate overlap of people served from year to year. For the raw totals we used the "population served worksheets" required in each semi-annual report to the federal officers monitoring SS/HS sites around the country. The average number of people served was reached by a standard but, in my view, problematic method instigated by the feds. In cooperation with each funded partner and

¹⁵⁶ Be assured that neither factual correctness nor legality were ever violated. Other evaluators, but also political staffers and public relations departments in general, can determine for themselves to what extent this convenient liberality in how to assign credit is typical.

the project manager, we summed across each year for the number of children and families who were *potentially* served by the funded programs of PRYSE. One reason for doing so was because in some cases funded partners had no way of reconciling exactly how many people may have been served by a given program.¹⁵⁷ But this type of “population served” calculation socializes organizations and evaluators alike into a numbers game that conceals more than it reveals.

By way of explication, the Community School District, QDA and NYPD were the partners most likely to have implemented programs that could have potentially directly impacted the highest numbers of young people living on the peninsula, given their institutional clout and reach. For instance, recall that the NYPD implemented a “Safe Corridors” program where youth officers patrolled the common paths from school to subway, before and after school. In the NYPD’s reports, as in our own final evaluation report, all of the students enrolled in the two middle schools and one high school in which the safe corridors were implemented – a total of 4,797 students – were included in the count for “population served” each year. That figure was then combined with the number of youth served in the five other programs for which the NYPD was funded through PRYSE, for a grand total over three years’ time of 25,723 children theoretically served. The worksheets and reports assumed these were literal, not theoretical. But were almost 5,000 students really served each year by the safe corridor? Certainly not. By contrast, the NYPD Explorers program, in which officers and youth were in close and regular contact over many hours, served an average of “only” 123 students over three years of funded programming. These two numbers, some 4,800 vs. 123, do not represent

¹⁵⁷ We also did so because the Evaluation Team could never have realistically tracked measurable outcomes for the variety of each funded partner’s programs *and* still captured community-level outcomes simultaneously. We had to make a choice between these two types of outcomes.

values that can be directly compared; but they are lumped together anyway in the “population served” figure.

Similarly, QDA in their report included 1,000 children who were assumed to have attended their “Say No to Violence, Say Yes to Tennis” single-day recreational event each year for three years. Adding those 3,000 to the totals served by their four additional PRYSE-funded initiatives, we found that on paper, the PRYSE-funded QDA programs served 4,141 children over three years. However, two QDA initiatives most likely to have had a lasting effect – the summer youth employment program which preceded PRYSE funding, and “Enriching Academics for Success,” an after-school homework assistance and standardized test preparation program which became operational in January 2003 – were recorded as serving a far less impressive-sounding total of approximately 120 children during the course of the project.

In short, the potential substantive impacts on the few who were engaged intensively are lost in the quest to justify continued funding by demonstrating (superficial) impacts on the many. The “population served” numbers are convenient for public relations but at best are merely indicative, and do not give an accurate, consistent idea of what PRYSE accomplished or failed to accomplish on the ground, or if the larger goals of SS/HS were met.¹⁵⁸ And that is why at the beginning the Evaluation Team decided (with the Coalition’s approval) to rely on community-wide demographic and economic data sets, as well as random-sample survey measures of resident perceptions, in an effort to see how these changed over time, and in the hope we would be able to find significant correlations between such changes and PRYSE interventions.

¹⁵⁸ Various other factually correct figures and assertions in the Executive Summary and the PRYSE Final Evaluation could be subjected to a deconstruction similar to what we have now seen for the \$3.4 million in leveraged grants and the 10,000 population served, but I believe my point is made.

The project manager was deeply dissatisfied with our findings, but her critique was unrelated to such matters as whether the numbers we used under standard SS/HS practice were valid and accurate measures of significant phenomena. It should be said that she acknowledged, even at this late stage, that she and the Coalition had “bought into” our original evaluation plans; but now, she said, she had determined that these had always been flawed. In her view, the evaluation was supposed to lead the PRYSE partners through “this process of finding evidence-based outcomes. And that didn’t happen. It was so important to have that outline from the very beginning.” The evaluation process should have been about “what each program was accomplishing,” not about the “indicators of community change” that the Evaluation Team had examined, which were by and large “social trends.” She believed the federal government was not interested in “opinions and perspectives,” which we had captured in in-depth interviews with participants, focus groups with youth, and the community survey; but only in numbers that demonstrated actual behavioral changes of individuals in the target population. From the federal government’s position, according to Brenda, coming up with “measurable outcomes” was necessary so that they were “not just throwing money into communities without knowing that they have effectiveness.” In this view, “the community” is really just a collection of individuals that need services, whether as intervention or prevention.

Perhaps most significantly, she said that “attitudes of community residents” were less relevant than creating an evaluation that would “help the subcontractors gather information on the deliverables and then evaluate the success.” The “broad sweeping goals” we had chosen made it “hard to *hold subcontractors to deliverables*” (emphasis

mine). In short, Brenda wanted leverage over the professionals in partner agencies working on the funded programs. At other times I would hear the same desire from Paul D. when he was heading up Weed & Seed, or Maggie M. in her management of the Rockaway Health Alliance. Project management tended to see the evaluator's role as being to help them gain leverage over project partners; in a sense, to play the heavy, to govern on their behalf.

Two initiatives I later served as an evaluator employed plans that allowed for the kind of leverage by management over individual partners that Brenda wished had been built into PRYSE. These were the Rockaway Health Alliance and a "Parental Information and Resource Center" (PIRC) in Rockaway.¹⁵⁹ (A PIRC is a species of neighborhood non-profit funded under No Child Left Behind.) In these two initiatives, all funded partners were required by federal guidelines to specify in advance exactly how many people they intended to reach over precise time periods. While setting up target numbers for "population served" by given deadlines offered program managers a tool of surveillance over funded partners, it also led to tension between managers, partners, and evaluators. At one Rockaway Health Alliance meeting, the Reverend Cassius explained his own conflict as the person held accountable for the activities of the health advocates trained and dispatched by his group with help from the HCAP grant. He said that "with money and accountability" he became a supervisor to his group of health advocates, when what he wanted was to be a motivator. As he saw it, the stipend he offered from the grant funds was not quite enough to "completely move" the health advocates, but in the process, because of these small sums, some of the spirit of the activity was lost. In

¹⁵⁹ Although RHA and the PIRC did not follow the CCI model as closely as PRYSE, in practice both operated as such by bringing as many stakeholders to the table as possible.

his view, demands for performance by numerical service benchmarks became more important than the quality of work in which his organization was engaged; it threatened to condition the advocates into going through the motions to meet numerical targets, rather than really serving people. In the end, his organization actually gave back some of the money they had been allocated because they refused to compromise their own mission, which was to work very closely with a manageable number of community residents and provide very intensive assistance to improve their physical and mental health.

Recall that the Reverend's group was the one with the smallest share of funds through PRYSE, and that he was the only funded partner representative to publicly question our values and priorities in our three-plus years of meetings. Among PRYSE representatives, he was also the only one to publicly question or challenge the necessity and implications of producing the kind of evidence we were required to produce and trained to embrace (the latter through the "Communities that Care" trainings, primarily). In the rare event that community-based organizations like the Ministers Coalition or the PIRC actively resisted participation in what they saw as a numbers game (which they did, to my chagrin as an evaluator in practice, but with my appreciation as a sympathetic community organizer in spirit), numbers still had to be produced by the program manager, thereby sometimes alienating the person in that role from the partner organizations. The evaluator was also in a difficult position, asked to hold unwilling people accountable for outcomes in which they had no faith.

So by the end of the project, Brenda had been socialized to, and accepted that, the kind of knowledge that initiatives like PRYSE need to produce to be rewarded with more

funding is really about *effectiveness* (defined as individual service with measurable resulting life changes), and that effectiveness did not include *perceptions*. (It would be years later before any SS/HS national evaluation data were available, and then we would see that perceptions *were* considered evidence in the eyes of the federal partners promoting it as such.)

Finally, it should be noted that during the formation of PRYSE the Evaluation Team had labored to get each funded organization to commit to an evaluation plan that included detailed measurable goals and outcomes, but with limited success. It would have required each partner, at the least, to commit to gathering their own data consistently; in the worst case, to hire their own evaluation consultant for the life of the project. The most highly resourced organizations participating in PRYSE may have been able to do that, but the least-resourced would never have accomplished such a task.

Of course, we on the Evaluation Team went ahead believing that we had introduced the other partners to the fine points of gathering evidence. We had not intended, and would not have had the resources, for a program-by-program evaluation or even a funded-organization-by-funded-organization reckoning of every one of the activities engaged with PRYSE funding. This was yet another reason that, given an effort focused on community-wide change, we had chosen to maintain a community-wide focus in our evaluation, particularly though the multi-year survey of residents. Perhaps our failures were in communication, but they were not idiosyncratic to our situation. (Perhaps as well PRYSE simply never had the kind of funding that making a real community-wide dent in the problems would have required, thus giving us more significant results to detect and measure.)

Finally, there was the dogged pretense, shared by so many still, that a community's variables can be cleanly isolated. In the PRYSE project, City-wide changes influenced how residents viewed the PRYSE partners, such as when the entire public school system was reorganized. The aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center and the crash of Flight 587 provided first-hand and dramatic experience in the difficulties of capturing all of the elements that contribute to either individual or community-level change. We discovered that some goods would not and could not be measured; they affected too few people or could not be incorporated directly into the evaluation from its outset. In the end, the question that challenged our team, as well as many other evaluators before and after us, is whether evaluation could be rigorous (and therefore respected for its legitimacy) if it did not meet the standards of quantitative social science inquiry more generally.

Evaluation Findings On Safe Schools/Healthy Students

Felix, et al. (2007) conducted a survey of SS/HS sites to gain an overview of program evaluation strategies. As they went ahead, they discovered, as I also did (see Chapter 1), that the national evaluation data for SS/HS grantees until then had not been released in 2007 as originally promised, and only a monograph with a few local evaluation results has been published. Felix and his colleagues went ahead and surveyed 49 of the 230 SS/HS sites that had been funded though early 2006. In an oblique comment they write that of the 230, "more than half of the funded programs have been completed," meaning that most of the sites are no longer funded by SS/HS and suggesting also that they have not been sustained (p. 10). At any rate, SS/HS does not

allow an initiative that receives funding to apply again, although the same LEA may do so with a new initiative.¹⁶⁰

Felix, et al. found that of the 49 sites responding, more than half had used a quasi-experimental design in conducting evaluation. Not surprisingly they attribute this to the difficulty of implementing randomized, control-group based designs in complex community-based service-oriented initiatives. We found the same challenge but argued, as others have also, that some of the most compelling information would not be produced via quantitative methods and narrow definitions of what counts as evidence (for example, Schorr, 2009, argues for a “results framework”).

Felix, et al. identified “the difficulty in finding balance between program needs and research rigor” (p. 16) as a frequent challenge in program evaluation across sites. In addition to the finding that many local evaluators relied on quasi-experimental designs, they also found that sites reported a “failure” to “adopt evidence-based practices” in programming. According to Felix, et al., SS/HS local evaluators more often used an individual level of analysis (47%) than school level (35%), community level (15%), or class level (12%). They don’t go into greater detail about level of analysis, but we realized in the course of our own evaluation, with its attempt to capture community-level change, that the Coalition partners and especially the project manager preferred data at the individual level more than any other.

Thus the challenges we experienced at PRYSE – including the pressure to adopt “evidence-based” practices that produced a particular kind of empirical knowledge (real or simulated) and the pressure to focus on the level of the individual as the preferred form

¹⁶⁰ The implicit theory apparently is either that new funds will be leveraged or that goals will be met within the funded period so effectively that there is no further need for the grantee initiative.

of evidence (but leading communities further afield from “community change”) – were similar to those of our SS/HS counterparts elsewhere, although we could not have known this because PRYSE came at a stage in the SS/HS programs too early for this knowledge to have been accumulated.

To date, the only official report from SS/HS on its national evaluation data (of later cohorts, conducted by MANILA Consulting after the replacement of the original research team from RTI, see Chapter 1) has come in the form of a short SAMHSA “data brief” in October 2009, announcing the following findings about the 2005 cohort of SS/HS grantees:

- A 15 percent decrease in the number of students involved in violent incidents during the grant period (from 17,800 in year 1 to 15,163 in year 3).
- A 12 percent decrease in the number of students reporting that they had experienced or witnessed violence from year 1 of the grant period to year 3.
- Most staff at grantee schools reported that the Initiative had made their schools safer. By year 3 of the grant, 84 percent said the Initiative had improved school safety, 77 percent said it had reduced violence on campus, and 75 percent said it had reduced violence in the community (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2009, para. 3).

The short Web page and accompanying single-page report (Safe Schools/Healthy Students, 2009) fail to make clear the sources for deriving evidence of fewer students reporting an experience of or witnessing violence. It is likely these are reports from or surveys of SS/HS administrators at funded schools, and if so might be accurate, but might also be subject to the thousand pressures to provide good results to which self-reporting from funded entities in the accountability order is heir. The findings on perceptions of school safety and campus and community violence are from an annual “School-Level

Survey” that must be administered either by SS/HS directly, or by the evaluators. Of course, PRYSE would have found it very difficult to survey school administrators on their perceptions, as they generally did not cooperate with us for the reasons we have so amply covered (see, especially, Chapter 3).

“What Works” – Findings on CCIs and Implications for Community Change

Since its formation in 1992, the Roundtable on Community Change at the Aspen Institute has been an active force in the promotion, implementation and assessment of CCIs in the United States. Within their stated goal – to seek solutions to poverty in distressed communities – the Roundtable was among the first to research and publish on CCIs, seeking to “synthesize and convey lessons learned” as well as “to connect the theory and practice of community building with the broader goals of social and economic justice” (Aspen Institute, 2009). They produced one of the earliest reports to compile lessons from the early work of CCIs, “Voices from the Field I” in 1997, and in 2002 published the second “Voices from the Field” – with support from nine major foundations in the US – which sought to assess the work of CCIs after about a decade of implementation. In 2010, they published a third volume on “lessons and challenges from two decades of community change efforts” (Kubisch, et al., 2010a).

Summarizing their findings on “Community Change Initiatives from 1990-2010,” Kubisch, the director of the Roundtable, and her colleagues categorize the real and attempted accomplishments of CCIs as belonging to three different levels:

- 1) Investments to improve human, physical, and economic development in poor neighborhoods (programmatic level);
- 2) Investments to strengthen community capacity (community level); and

3) Investments to generate policy and systems change (structural level).¹⁶¹ (2010a)

In terms of development, the first criterion, Kubisch and her colleagues report mixed results. While evidence gathered demonstrates an increase in *programming* for low-income families in targeted neighborhoods, and thereby some small improvement in the well-being of individual residents participating in those programs, very little *economic development* has been stimulated because “too many of the forces that drive economic activity *are outside of the control of neighborhood actors*” (p. 9, emphasis mine and a point to which return at the end).

In terms of the second criterion, that of community building or capacity, they see CCIs as having concentrated on “developing individual leadership; increasing organizational capacity and a sense of community among residents; and increasing civic capacity and voice” (p. 9). They emphasize that qualitative methods are best at capturing any resulting increases in capacity. What they don’t ask is how long these positive benefits may last in a neighborhood, or whether they can be transferred to leaders and organizations that appear after a CCI ends. Perhaps more importantly, contention exists about the extent to which community building speaks to “success” in CCIs. There is a divide between those who argue that civic capacity and social capital are goods in their own right, and those who believe that community building is simply a means to an end, i.e., of tangible outcomes of direct poverty reduction. Kubisch, et al. note that little empirical evidence exists to demonstrate that increasing community capacity also leads to improving individual, family or community outcomes (noting, however, that this may be

¹⁶¹ The focus on “investments” is partly attributable to the magazine in which this article appeared, as it is intended for a community development audience and published by the Community Development Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.

mostly because funders have been unwilling to invest in the sophisticated research and evaluation required to gather such evidence).

With regard to the third criterion, of policy (if not really structural) change, recall that CCIs were in part crafted in the effort to break down the “silos” separating funding streams as well as areas of focus (as was the case with SS/HS) in the hope of tapping efficiencies and creating synergies.¹⁶² Findings to date indicate that such efforts have only partially compensated for, and have not solved, the problems of “siloes” public and private funding (Kubisch, et al., 2010b, p. 9). Having “an organized, legitimate and effective coalition” can help communities gather new resources, and also facilitates relationships between the site community and institutions with “access, leverage and influence in the public sector” (p. 10); although the reports provide no specifics about these benefits, nor about the nature of the relationships mentioned.

Thus, by Kubisch et al., to date we can see the most clear evidence of improvements only in *programming*; but as for the continued underlying goal of *community change* at the heart of CCIs, they conclude that alignment in programs and strategies to create meaningful change in poor communities has proven much more difficult than anticipated. Comprehensive long-term community and structural change take time and creativity to capture in research; the focus on the programmatic is partly explained when we recall that CCIs, almost always facing pressure to consider (and fight for) sustainability from their inception, devote more attention to the more measurable programmatic activities (Foster-Fishman et al., 2003 as cited in Trent and Chavis, 2009, p. 106).

¹⁶² “Silo” as we learned in Chapter 1 is government speak akin to saying “our department is Justice, we can’t be involved in Education,” and vice versa.

In their 2010 report on the status of 20 years of CCI-related work, Kubisch and her Roundtable colleagues conclude that strategies for broader policy reform that would actually produce structural change and interrupt the reproduction of inequality “need action beyond the community level” (2010a, p. 182). CCIs have not directly addressed “issues of power imbalance, institutional racism, and social equity” (pp. 182-183). They conclude that the only way to achieve comprehensive community change is through a **national movement**, though they leave unspecified the features of such collective action.

This does not mean, however, that strategic institutional brokers cannot work to produce **community support**, even if change is beyond the scope of a local initiative. Other researchers examining foundation-involved work have also found that brokers between local efforts and outside resources can play an important role in reaching community-level change. Trent and Chavis (2009), in a study for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, examined ten CCIs implemented between 1990 and 2009 to find “success factors,” those which relate to the “ability of a CCI to achieve the scope and scale required to generate *community-level* outcomes and to sustain those positive impacts over time” (emphasis theirs) (p. 96).¹⁶³

Six factors were found to cut across scope, scale, and sustainability. These factors include having a single broker or entity that holds the vision of the change effort; clearly defined roles; alignment among interventions, resources, and geography; meaningful community engagement; competent leadership and staff; and strategic, cross-level relationships (p. 96).

To reach sustainability on the community level, Trent and Chavis recommend that coalitions look “beyond the quest for alternative sources of funding” to the institutionalization of the initiative in the community in question, as well as to capacity

¹⁶³ Eight of the CCIs that they examined were funded *exclusively* by foundations, one had blended foundation and federal funding, and one had state funding.

building, e.g., does the initiative bring skills and knowledge needed to support innovative approaches to address complex social problems? (p. 106). However, they also mention that one successful initiative was able to secure long-term funding at the outset, thus relieving it of the quest for funding that organizations must generally undertake. In the initiatives they examined, cross-level relationships translate into political relationships that can transcend the local and seek resources beyond the community at hand. Similarly, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative prioritized the need for political strategy; they decided that focus must rest on the entire city in which their project was located, rather than in a "relatively small section of the city" (Jellinek, 2007, p. 5). In addition to social capital, **political and cultural capital** are required to create systemic change; as was found also in rural efforts at collaborative community change (Flora, 2003).

Finally, the federal government has also turned its attention to considering lessons from the decades of academic and applied research into CCIs, in the form of the Federal Partnership Project of the CCJJDP.¹⁶⁴ Like the above major studies, the federal study has found that CCI efforts have not resulted in structural change (although they do not, of course, call it structural change, as sociologists tend to, but rather system change). The Federal Partnership Project's 2008 literature review explains that evaluations of CCIs document "significant accomplishments" but have not established "a connection between system change and client outcomes" (p. 18). They concur with Auspos and Kubisch (2004) that while we have some solid evidence about the programmatic effects of CCIs, we lack information that CCIs are, in fact, an effective revitalization strategy at the

¹⁶⁴ Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, a body within the SS/HS partner agency, the OJJDP, and publisher of the CCI "tool-kit" Web site, ccitoolsforfeds.org.

community level. The recommendations produced for federal program officers do not explicitly suggest political capital or political strategy as necessities for CCI success, but they do suggest that among the most helpful attributes for technical assistance providers to communities are **political astuteness** and the ability to help local leaders negotiate political terrain.

Federal CCIs Today: Promise Neighborhoods

Given the findings above, at a minimum, thoughtful and well-informed planning become critical to any CCI. At the end of the PRYSE initiative I heard Brenda Z. and many other PRYSE participants, from the funded organizations as well as resident volunteers, remark that they wished we had had a whole year to get ready for the work that we did. The Aspen Institute devoted a chapter's worth of recommendations to the specifics of what they call "internal alignment" in community change efforts. And the necessity for longer and more intensive planning and attention to the actual workings of partnership have been incorporated at the federal level; for a start, SS/HS requires concrete evidence of previously existing partnerships to apply for funding. More significant is the newest iteration of federally-sponsored programming on the CCI model: the Obama Administration's "Promise Neighborhoods" program, which automatically builds in a full funded year for planning a local site.

"Promise Neighborhoods" first received media attention in January 2009, although Obama had announced the idea as a candidate in July 2007 (Perry, 2008). Taking Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) as the model, the federal government received 339 applications for up to 20 communities that were to be chosen to

receive planning grants of \$500,000 for one year (Klein, 2009).¹⁶⁵ As per a June 2010 release from the Education Department Press Office, the planning phase is to be followed by funding for implementation of comprehensive services (Promise Neighborhoods Program, para. 6).

Promise Neighborhoods differs from CCIs that require partnership across multiple agencies and organizations, but also from those that require coalitions at the local level. While the program is modeled on the Harlem Children's Zone, it cannot be underemphasized that HCZ owes a great deal of its success to *having access to \$17 million per year to spend in a 24-block range*. The majority of HCZ funding comes from foundations, corporations and private individuals (less than 30% of the organization's funding is from government sources) and it is very much a showcase initiative for its sponsors. Furthermore, not all observers have been equally enthusiastic about the success of the HCZ. Steinberg, sociologist of race and ethnicity, in a recent critique of the argument that the "culture of poverty" thesis is making a comeback, noted that the backing of the HCZ by William Julius Wilson has led the Obama administration to embrace the model as a solution, but one that ignores, and is no match for, structural inequities:

At best... HCZ is a showcase project that, even multiplied twenty times, is no remedy for the deep and widening income gap between blacks and others. At worst, the Obama administration is using it to camouflage its utter failure to address issues of racism and poverty (Steinberg, 2011, para. 43).

¹⁶⁵ During my years working with PRYSE, the Harlem Children's Zone would come up repeatedly as the model to emulate. Brenda Z. visited and Andre L. urged that HCZ "must be the model" in our post-PRYSE interview (see Chapter 5).

Among the conditions for applying to Promise Neighborhoods, proposals had to be “place-based,” applicants had to operate a school or partner with one, and the applicant’s governing board had to have at least a one-third membership of some combination of the area’s residents, residents who are low-income, and public officials serving the area (Promise Neighborhoods Program, 2010). However, while the funding for the Promise Neighborhoods planning phase was put forward, a Senate appropriations committee has cut the president’s proposal of \$210 million for the upcoming fiscal year down to \$20 million. Twenty-one neighborhoods were awarded planning grants of up to \$500,000 each, and they presumably planned on the basis of the expected national follow-up funding of \$210, not \$20 million. If the funding is not restored, then the partners in these initiatives and the host communities may have spent a year planning work that they will never be funded to implement, at least not by the federal government. (As of December 2010, with the failure of the omnibus budget deal, it appears that Promise Neighborhoods will merely be “flat-funded” to continue at a \$10 million per year sustaining budget, although the budget is to be reconsidered in March 2011.)

Regarded as “President Obama’s flagship anti-poverty program,” Promise Neighborhoods has been the subject of public debate in the media, but not for its failure to address social stratification. The Brookings Institution has released a critical report (Whitehurst & Croft, 2010) arguing that little evidence exists to support the federal financial investment in the Harlem Children’s Zone model. Brookings took issue less with the test score gains of children in HCZ charter schools and more with the claims that HCZ makes for the importance of focusing on comprehensiveness. In its critique of adopting HCZ as the model for the new federal program, Brookings argues that even if

test scores in HCZ charter schools have increased, HCZ has not provided “good evidence” “that investments in wraparound support services and neighborhood improvements are a cost effective approach to increasing academic achievement” (para. 2).¹⁶⁶ Brookings asserts that outside of HCZ, comprehensiveness has not been demonstrated as an education reform that improves the lives of the children involved in participating schools, and objects to using HCZ alone as evidence to justify what authors Whitehurst and Croft call “an expensive new approach.” They point to available quantitative data showing that students at the two HCZ charter schools do about as well as students in comparable charter schools in Manhattan and the Bronx. In addition, HCZ is not a coalition, which raises the question of how “comprehensive” one school or non-profit can be without partnering across organizations and agencies. Is it possible to claim comprehensiveness without a coalition, knowing that services alone are never enough to move poor neighborhoods out of poverty (Lawrence, 2001)?

But Promise Neighborhoods and another initiative promoted by the White House Office of Urban Affairs called Choice Neighborhoods, which is essentially an updated version of HOPE VI, have embraced the focus on collaboration. These programs were developed through the White House Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, the goal of which is to create what they call “neighborhoods of opportunity” (White House, n.d., p. 2). These are clearly “place-based” programs that are intended to see the Departments of Education, Justice and Housing and Urban Development collaborate at the federal level while neighborhoods are to see collaboration among institutions and organizations at the

¹⁶⁶ In child and family service work, the equivalent of “comprehensiveness” is “wraparound,” a process first popularized in the 1980s by clinical psychologist Lenore Behar, who was an early advocate for community (rather than institutional) mental health services for children. Incidentally, Behar pled guilty in 2001 in North Carolina to a federal charge of obstruction of justice in misusing federal foster care money (Report of the Joint Senate-House..., 2001).

local level. Again, whether the financial capital will be allocated to these efforts remains to be seen, but collaboration (which is the new “partnership”) and interdisciplinarity (the new “comprehensiveness”) are being promoted as among the necessities to reduce neighborhood poverty and alleviate the burdens it brings to bear on residents.

Place, by all accounts, matters, as does the development and nurturing of authentic partnership approaches to social problems. However, “Promise Neighborhoods,” like the HCZ and other place-based comprehensive community initiatives, will still not bring structural change without an agenda that directly addresses equity. In PRYSE, we all came together around leadership that promoted cultural change to the detriment of the many neighborhoods that have deeply-rooted institutional inequities. In a sense, the partners, without even knowing it, rallied around a “culture of poverty” thesis that assumed that poor people and their customs and values needed to change in order to improve the health and safety of the area’s children. But “poverty is the result of politics as much as it is of policy” and without political strategy, even the most authentic partnership will not alter either (Pastor & Turner, 2010, p. 21).

But more than this, the professionals who have been most closely analyzing comprehensive community change efforts conclude that

social change leaders must adopt an explicitly race-conscious approach to their work: they must factor race into their analysis of the causes of the problems they are addressing, and they must factor race into their strategies to promote change and equity (Lawrence, et al., 2010, p. 35).

Calling this a “structural racism framework,” Lawrence and other Aspen Institute Roundtable members are not advocating attention to race relations, but rather to racial disparity. This is an openly political position, but one that they argue, convincingly,

seeks to prioritize racial equity in social institutions from universities to banks. In this view, grassroots organizing and advocacy, often left to community organizers, is as essential to the task as is electoral participation.

Real Promise: CCIs, Capacity Building and Underinvestment

Beyond the need to attend to racial equity, and to incorporate political strategy, what else explains the fact CCIs have “not produced the degree of community transformation” that was envisioned by those who designed them (Kubisch, et al., 2010b, p. 10)? The same designers attribute the lack of change to failure at the levels of theory and implementation. The theory – “that a relatively modest amount of philanthropic or government dollars” would lead to major improvements in the most burdened places in relatively short periods of time (seven to ten years) – was “overly optimistic” (p. 10). The assessment of the implementation failures includes an important issue for neighborhoods like Rockaway: “weak capacity resulting from long-term underinvestment” (p. 10). So not only is much more time necessary (as the QDA executives also argued during our last interview about PRYSE), but much more realistic attention needs to be paid to just how “underinvested” an area has been when expecting that community to craft change. In addition to racial disparity, lacking attention to equality in material and political resources compromises the potential efficacy of CCIs.

As the Aspen Institute Roundtable notes about the most successful CCIs, *goals need to be realistic*, given the under-resourced capacity of the organizations in the most “distressed” neighborhoods involved in implementation (Kubisch, et al., 2010b). But beyond realism, public recognition of such inequity can only strengthen the buy-in of

residents and professionals in those neighborhoods. Also critical is *stakeholder agreement on values and goals* – reaching consensus on the definition of “success” in a given CCI. This insight reiterates the necessity of a planning period that involves more than individual stakeholders and funded agencies committing to implementation of only their own agenda. And in terms of implementation, the Roundtable further finds that “capacity” has been viewed too narrowly as the ability of an organization to implement an initiative, rather than the more elusive “community capacity,” which promises changes that go beyond the level of service provision to individuals. Importantly, the Roundtable members write that public funds are unlikely to be available for this form of capacity building, and conclude that relying on foundations’ more flexible funding is therefore the key.

This last insight may come naturally from the perspective of a body like the Aspen Institute Roundtable, which acts as a research arm to a coalition of philanthropies; but it begs the question of *why* public money is not available for community capacity building, that is, if decades of research have found that capacity building is so important and effective. In other words, the attitude that foundations at least are free to devote private resources to these efforts does nothing to advance a change agenda in the public realm, nor does it address the challenges facing communities that cannot or have not accessed philanthropic support. The problem implicit in the comment is that the empirically wise measure is still viewed in the political environment as a waste of tax dollars. The right response is to ask how to confront and change those politics; which brings us again to the need for expressly political community coalitions.

The limits of capacity building and the effects of differential capacity of participant organizations are also illuminated in the Rockaway case. If we think of the Ministers Coalition as an exemplar of a grassroots and under-resourced organization in an under-resourced neighborhood, and if we think of the PRYSE Coalition as an opportunity for even this one organization to build its capacity through exposure and relationships with more highly resourced institutions, then we might expect some benefit to the Ministers' group simply by virtue of this exposure and relationship. Some small benefits may have accrued to the Ministers in the short-term, as when Reverend Cassius successfully secured a part of the Healthy Communities Access grant for his organization, or when he was invited to participate in the national Safe Schools/Healthy Students conference. Here his social capital may have increased, and with it his own personal financial capital as well as his ability to access such capital on behalf of his coalition. His organization may have continued to receive small grants from local politicians, but from all accounts, including the Reverend's, their capacity as an organization did not dramatically increase or alter due to participation in the PRYSE Coalition.

Perhaps more importantly, the constituents who were their priority – those “people in the basements” whom Cassius so often invoked – did not find a path to lead them out of the lack of resources that made them a priority to the Ministers Coalition in the first place. In fact, in PRYSE, the people most impacted by the reach of policy and governance, but also by the *experience* of partnership and its capacity building effects, were not the residents of the Rockaway peninsula at all. Rather these were the street-level bureaucrats, managers and professionals like me, who were paid to participate.

Clearly, access to material resources is not synonymous with either capacity building or with lasting change at the level of a community or neighborhood, not to mention at a structural level. Nor should evidence that one small organization marginally, or even dramatically, increased its own ability to engage in strategic action on behalf of its constituents lead us to assume that community capacity has increased or that the community overall has changed fundamentally (which is also a problem with Brenda Z.'s preference to focus evaluation entirely on the "performance" in numbers served against targets set by each partner organization). Participating in a coalition focused on comprehensiveness does not necessarily result in an alignment of programs and strategies, and community building does not necessarily lead to an alignment of stakeholders (Kubisch, et al., 2010).

Another, and central, challenge for those concerned with governance in communities is how to strike a balance that advances the development of cultural and political capital, participatory democracy and actual collective action; but without *overburdening* the least-resourced individuals, organizations and neighborhoods with all of the responsibility for effecting change (Taylor, 2003). That, too, entails acknowledgment of the structural roots of inequalities, and demands strategies for change that go beyond the lives of professionals working for change, and even of residents in "target" neighborhoods.

Self-Conscious Action and Community Change

When working within the logic of a CCI, it is easy for those involved intensively to forget that an initiative, regardless of its comprehensiveness, is not necessarily enough

to change a social problem, no matter how small that problem may seem to be in relative terms. In such work it is also too easy to focus on human service programs when they may actually make only a small contribution in the overall dynamics of any given social problem (McClintock, 2003). Collaboration or service integration is one way by which the gap is supposed to close between social problems and the organizations that seek to address them, but in theory CCIs are intended to do much more than integrate services (McClintock, 2003). With the emphasis on partnership and collaboration ubiquitous in contemporary community work, can we identify strategies that, in the words of Taylor (2003, p. 15), “make participation and empowerment policies work, at the community and partnership level”?

Taylor reinvigorates relevant insights from Marris and Rein’s 1967 analysis of social reform, community action and the War on Poverty. Then and now, communities seeking to change their circumstances must face the “intransigent autonomy of public and private agencies” as well as the challenges of adopting informed and evidence-based approaches to evaluation (Marris & Rein, 1967, as cited in Deakin & Taylor, 2001, p. 7). In contrast to the War on Poverty programs many decades ago, in contemporary times non-profits and in fact *for-profits* have increasingly taken over from government as service providers – the “contracting regime” so named by Smith and Lipsky (1995). They are expected to collaborate while still competing amongst themselves in service provision. Even with that distinction drawn, then and now, meager reforms are all we can expect, as the demands of the poor will be more than any of these agencies can or will assimilate (Marris & Rein, 1967, as cited in Taylor, 2003, p. 218). Today, as “best practices” and evidence-based reforms are prioritized, Taylor adds to the argument by

emphasizing the *impossibility* of producing the kinds of evidence politicians require, i.e., clear-cut, swift, neatly numbered. In short, without expanding knowledge production, we cannot hope to accumulate real evidence of “what works” in community/partnership work in the most neglected urban neighborhoods (p. 218).

Taylor has not cast off the need for evidence and rigor in scholarship, but rather, following Marris and Rein, argues that professional experts have a role to play in community change as “social reformers,” acting as brokers between government and people in a CCI, not simply as an extension of government (p. 220). The professionals working in non-profits or independently as advocates for community building and change, like Lipsky’s (2010) street-level bureaucrats implementing policy, also carry the potential to frustrate the intentions of centralized control (Taylor, 2003). In addition, the research strategies brought to bear on CCIs may serve to enhance, rather than simply attempt to observe, community change.

Once again, regardless of whether community coalitions and other new governance spaces in neighborhoods represent “governing at a distance” or a perpetuation of state power through new types of technical and managerial control, the research already shows these new spaces have yet to produce the kind of change that was anticipated, meaning change at the systems or structural level (Taylor, 2003). The most compelling explanation for this failure lies in that CCIs almost never explicitly acknowledge the underlying dimensions along which urban neighborhood inequities fall: race and class. Given that CCIs generally take place in neighborhoods that are majority poor and almost always also majority Black and Latino, “there was an implicit assumption that CCIs would quietly accomplish racial equity goals sought through

confrontation in previous decades” (Lawrence, 2001, p. 42). The assumption in nongovernmental solutions to urban revitalization has been that denser collaborative networks in neighborhoods will overcome the structural and institutional barriers that block the advancement of poor people, and people of color, but these solutions based on social capital, on which CCIs have explicitly pinned their hopes, have proven inadequate (Lawrence, 2001).

Political and cultural capital are also necessary in overcoming the barriers faced in neighborhoods like Rockaway. This also requires professionals and researchers acting self-consciously to build toward community change, but particularly toward a change agenda that prioritizes equality, even if that may mean conflict. In the government-sponsored CCIs considered here, the feds embraced the assumption that collaboration was key, but in a broad landscape that did not address racial and class divisions. Like many of their philanthropic counterparts, the federal government mandates subsume or altogether ignore institutionalized racism and class stratification. Government-sponsored efforts like Safe Schools/Healthy Students have been crafted with a bias toward individual-level and local solutions that don’t attend to or even acknowledge structural power asymmetries. Tension may arise from a commitment to an equality agenda, but without tension change may not come.

A preference for an apolitical politics and a collaborative spirit that avoids conflict perhaps explain the popularity of the “risk and protective factor” approach preferred in government-sponsored CCIs, which eschews social theory and focuses on individual factors, generally defined in medical-pathological terms. True, the “Communities that Care” system at least includes “extreme economic deprivation” as one

of the community risk factors (and it was one we PRYSE participants chose to focus on during our training in the “Communities That Care” model). But the only “protective” or counterbalancing factors offered against this risk in the positive column of the CtC schematic are “opportunities for prosocial involvement in community” and “recognition for prosocial involvement” (e.g., see Arthur, Hawkins, Pollard, Catalano, & Baglioni, 2002). Under this model, a community-level, structural problem apparently can be addressed at the level of the individual young person, albeit in a community setting, by involving them in prosocial activities (nothing wrong with that) and making sure they receive “recognition” for their involvement. While prosocial involvement may indeed improve one’s attachment to an institution or a neighborhood, celebrating youth’s contributions is no substitute for a redistribution of wealth, or at least of publicly raising discomfiting questions about power, prestige and resources. To put it in metaphoric terms, a plaque for service won’t make up for a lack of breakfast.

SS/HS programming does not rely exclusively on the “Communities That Care” model, of course. But we the professionals of the Rockaway coalition received a year of fairly intensive training to organize and orient ourselves to risk and protective factors as defined in CtC, and this had a big impact on our later work with HCAP and other activities after PRYSE. Not one of us ever openly criticized this pursuit, to my knowledge, but after the Coalition’s money and the professionals’ time, energy and hopes were invested in CtC trainings rather than field work, we did not find that the investment had brought us any closer to sustainable programs, increased community participation, or renewed funding. Given that, and also seeing that CtC offers little direction to

communities concerned with extreme economic deprivation, and entirely avoids the key questions of discrimination and other forms of social exclusion, what is it good for?

Here we leave CtC behind but also recall, with Taylor, that “Cynicism is a luxury which abandons those who are excluded to their fate. There has to be a place for optimism, or at least for a pragmatic reworking of the lessons of the past” (2007, p. 222). The Aspen Institute Roundtable, as we saw, has begun advocating for and incorporating a structural racism analysis into its theory-based program planning and evaluation techniques, which include a focus on racial equity (though no class-based analysis has been suggested) as well as race-conscious outcomes (Lawrence, 2001; and Lawrence et al., 2010).¹⁶⁷ Foundation initiated or sponsored CCIs may have some of the flexibility and political capital required to craft initiatives with attention to structural racism, but government CCIs, while they may be explicit in seeking to improve communities through “systems change,” still go no further than endorsing “cultural competence” (left undefined) as a prerequisite for truly transforming a community’s systems (Federal Partnership Project, n.d, para. 5). On the ground at our SS/HS site, only participants who were also members of the most marginalized ethnoracial groups in the area would mention concerns about “cultural sensitivity,” race, poverty or politics.¹⁶⁸

As Marwell (2004, p. 267) notes, there are generally three main types of activities engaged in by community-based organizations (CBOs): “service provision, community building, and electoral politics.” In her interesting work on CBOs in Brooklyn, Marwell includes activity focused on electoral politics, on the “local allocative process” (as

¹⁶⁷ In 2003, the Tides Center launched the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE) to influence grantmakers to understand and strategize about racial equity issues (PRE Goals and Strategies, n.d.).

¹⁶⁸ The need to address structural racism is another example, as with community capacity above, where it is not enough to say, “the foundations can do it, since they’re free,” but where we must also ask how to change the political equation that prevents government involvement in more sensible policy.

opposed to policy advocacy or protest movements) because she argues that CBOs can fill the gap left by now-defunct political party organizations in poor neighborhoods. Marwell carefully distinguishes non-profits from CBOs, explaining that CBOs are generally organized around and focus programs in a particular geographic space, and that their missions concentrate on disadvantaged residents of those geographic places. It is this “disenfranchised community” orientation that distinguishes CBOs from other nonprofits in poor neighborhoods (non-profit hospitals, for example). However, Marwell also argues that while CBOs share something in common with the oppositional stance of protest movements, their dependence on government funding places them in a less contentious relationship with the state (p. 270). Nonetheless, the process of community building in which many CBOs engage presents the opportunity to build at least some of the political will, the political capital, that is necessary to true community change; even then, such change may not come to a given neighborhood or place without the influence of outside social forces and/or a long-term effort.

The difficulty on the ground is that community organizing and service provision are often incompatible, even if service provision masks a politics of its own. As Marwell notes in a 2009 community forum on Williamsburg and Bushwick, “an organizer is not a service provider and when you become a service provider it’s hard to stay an organizer” (para. 8). But organizers, and even less radical advocates, can work alongside service providers around a community improvement mission as long as everyone participating can accept the necessity of political strategy alongside addressing shorter-term needs.

In considering some of the costs of community partnership work, Taylor (2003) found that rather than building political strength, many community organizations report a

loss of political will and fight through their participation as partners, in particular due to the demands made on those involved to find funding for sustainability and meet the expectations that government has for outputs. Taylor also reports on communities (primarily in the UK, but sites of community partnership work similar to CCIs in the US) that are being put in compromising positions between different governmental agencies, and of non-profits that vie with each other for territory. Often there is a superficiality of partnerships, whereby only junior staff or those unable to make decisions on behalf of an organization or agency are sent to “partner” with community residents, leaving the organization effectively out of the loop of its own commitments on the ground. This “politics of no politics,” competition for turf and funds among partners, and superficiality of organizations within the partnership because of organizational hierarchies were all also evident in the work of the PRYSE Coalition. In addition, organizational visions may be compromised by participation in partnership; in some cases, Taylor notes a loss of consultation with the people that community representatives are beholden to consult; and there may also be increased competition for or resentment over funding among partners. Increased competition was directly addressed in the work of the PRYSE Coalition, but the compromise of the partner organizations’ existing visions was not among the dangers at PRYSE.

A focus on neoliberalism as an entity that orders and controls individuals across space reifies the complex, multi-form nature of networks at the same time as it places neoliberalism beyond the reach of political resistance.

(Argent, 2005, p. 30)

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Only an intensive and well-funded community planning process that offers residents the opportunity to build knowledge and skill, as well as illuminates local and extra-local power relations and the variety of strategies available to organized communities to use the leverage inherent in the demand for community participation, *along with* rigorous research that captures more than numbers served, will advance goals as social, advanced and complex as reducing youth violence, not to mention promoting community economic development.

Researchers not only limited to the Aspen Institute Roundtable of philanthropies have suggested that a federally-initiated program is unlikely ever explicitly to permit political strategizing as among its funded activities. We still hold out hope that, in fact, the wisdom of allowing exactly that can prevail, but getting to the point where the government may one day sensibly fund coalitions that engage as political actors (non-partisan) with grassroots mobilization, and are also explicit about race disparity and class

inequality, will itself require political organizing – doubtless in coalitions – to transform the reigning climate in the first place.¹⁶⁹

Notwithstanding the principle that the government and those it represents require some standard by which to decide where to distribute public dollars, and that some accountability is necessary – not only to those distributing funds (and paying for them in taxes) or administering them at the local level, but also in reverse, *accountability to those the funds are intended to benefit* – limiting the accumulation of evaluation evidence only to that gathered via quantitative research does not further our understanding of how best to develop community capacity for long-term and broad social changes.

With these insights gained from our last chapter in mind, let us look a final time at PRYSE, why it didn't work, and what might work in the future.

The End of PRYSE – A Summary

The PRYSE project ended with the departure of Brenda Z.'s leadership in late 2004, and even her continued presence would have been extremely unlikely to make up for the end of the SS/HS grant period more than a year earlier and the imminent exhaustion of the Coalition's remaining funds. Not to mention exhaustion of the participants.

On the level of building “community capacity” in the sense of social capital, PRYSE as a coalition created a few relationships among professionals that had not

¹⁶⁹ The speed with which ACORN, the largest advocacy and community organizing group for the poor in the United States, met its demise after a sudden hurricane of bad media prompted by a transparent hoax, with an added whirlwind of unfounded scorn from punditry and a near-unanimous vote to defund it by politicians of the conventional political parties, does not offer a hopeful example as to reigning attitudes about organizing to address urban poverty explicitly in political terms. I give this example as an acknowledgment of how difficult the initial situation is.

existed before. It also may have forged a few relationships between the community residents its work was intended to impact and the professionals involved in that work. Several years after PRYSE ended, the Rockaway Men United group (RMU) was still meeting with youth in the local high schools (with minimal or no funding) as the only surviving dynamic connection formed to work directly with neighborhood youth in the spirit of the grant proposal. However, it should be noted that the leaders of RMU were able to use the substantial resources of their respective organizations for the infrastructural needs of their group, that they still drew their normal salaries, and that one of the three partners in RMU was working for the local Department of Education region, which was essential in gaining access to the schools.

It is also true that organizations within PRYSE, notably the Family Health Clinic and the mediation group, expanded their own existing activities during the time of PRYSE, such as with the FHC's building of a satellite community service center in Far Rockaway, or the creation of the Rockaway Health Alliance (now also defunct), and also that such measures at times were attributed as PRYSE accomplishments. However, expectations that the SS/HS grant and the Coalition's activity would serve to attract sufficient "leverage" in the way of other grants, participation of new groups with their own funding, or volunteer labor from the neighborhood were always overstated. While other grants and funding were secured, the sum would not have been enough to continue the Coalition's activities after the end of the federal funding; in any case, almost all of this additional "leveraged" funding was not secured for the Coalition itself, but rather went to individual funded partners for other projects, and thus made no difference to the Coalition's sustainability.

From the beginning the SS/HS money represented insufficient funding for the goals of the Coalition as proposed, and SS/HS requirements created a limiting set of goals and predetermined relationships among agencies and organizations. PRYSE agendas and budgeting practices were largely dictated by SS/HS law and therefore inflexible on many points. In part because of that, changes at PRYSE that would have been viewed as uncontroversial and pragmatic had to be conducted in an opaque fashion, hidden from view and seemingly arbitrary, despite Brenda Z.'s genuine and sincere attempts at transparency and generally collaborative style. Perhaps the most fateful SS/HS stricture, however, was that its funding to any given initiative is one-time only; by implication, an initiative must “leverage” or one day sink.¹⁷⁰

There was no pre-existing coalition in Rockaway of community-based groups dealing with the problems SS/HS was meant to address, and the PRYSE Coalition came together for the purpose of winning an SS/HS grant. In effect, the SS/HS funding was just enough to serve as a remarkable magnet to attract professionals from a variety of organizations, resources and volunteer energy. The ten funded agencies and organizations ran programs that were consistent with their own organizational visions, which preceded the SS/HS initiative. PRYSE funds were often supplements to organizational budgets for ongoing activities, which did not serve to promote the sustainability of the Coalition. The organizations' representatives coalesced in

¹⁷⁰ Or, perhaps, an initiative can try to accomplish all goals so effectively within the funded period that the need for it is obviated. The fact that SS/HS grants cannot be renewed cast the many debates over our evaluation at PRYSE in a radically different light; even the most satisfying report to “the feds” would have been a moot letter as far as renewed SS/HS funding was concerned, and of potential funding value to PRYSE *only* as a selling point in leveraging other funding. The point of evaluation to SS/HS, presumably, was to inform the federal program's future efforts; however, this might require making the findings widely known. The lack of SS/HS national evaluations published to date, except for a single page, must make one wonder about the point, beyond making some sort of minimal control against having the money go to rip-offs, corruption, trips to Brazil, etc. (See Chapter 8, section on “Evaluation Findings on Safe Schools/Healthy Students”).

committees and a few community-wide, mostly recreational activities to advance the vision of a safer, more inclusive community, but did so largely to fulfill an expectation of funding, and after the initial excitement and motivation had worn thin.

The Coalition had lacked a true (and properly funded) planning phase, but even that might not have led to a clear path to sustain programs that were idiosyncratic to the organizations that proposed and implemented them. We lacked a true partnership, along with a true link to the community. So in this case, and likely in many other CCIs, existing *institutional actors were organized* using the language of “organizing the community” itself. Coordination was improved among the bureaucratic agencies that impinge on poor communities, and while the individuals who came to represent “the community” did have the best of intentions, they were not part of the community being acted upon. The language of community intervention obscured and mystified this.¹⁷¹

Our exhaustive review of PRYSE’s history has shown that the initiative and the associated Coalition partners, as at many other CCIs, were active on the programmatic front. Large numbers for “population served” were achieved, despite the deceptiveness and drawbacks of that particular measure (as reviewed in Chapter 8). This activity enhanced the social and cultural capital of some of the professionals already in those roles, but the Coalition was not as active as any of the partners had expected as a collaborative organized to improve school safety and promote healthy students. Little remained behind to testify to the impact of PRYSE as a Coalition after its end, and there is little evidence that the original PRYSE goals of community change were significantly addressed in the long run by the initiative’s activities.

¹⁷¹ The author is indebted to Paul Attewell for this insight (as for numerous others that have flowed into this work).

When the federal funding period was exhausted at the end of the first three years, and we requested a no-cost extension, the PRYSE Coalition committed itself to be “vision-driven” rather than “fund-driven.” We spent many hours, dollars and a great deal of energy to agree upon a vision and mission that emphasized strengthening the community. While the eventual PRYSE vision could be bought into by everyone, as all of the funded partners and a handful of residents had crafted it over many hours and catered sandwiches at day-long retreats – and who could object to “A safe, inclusive, aesthetic, beautiful, unified community where children and families are socially, emotionally, physically, academically and economically healthy and strong” – it was the promise of funding that drove us, even after we told ourselves that it was the values, not the dollars, keeping us together.

Almost all of the professionals and interested parties who came regularly to PRYSE Coalition or partner meetings (project managers, funded program staff, volunteers, community residents, youth, and evaluators) *were working for a salary or the hope of organizational funding*, as well as for the opportunity to influence everyday life on the peninsula. Funded and unfunded participants alike knew that funding would only come to (and be sustained for) those whose evidence most closely met the federal expectations of performance and accountability. If they didn’t know that when they first arrived at the table, they had been indoctrinated to that reality by the time they left.

Underlying issues of power, race, class, sexuality and gender were rarely addressed publicly, and then contentiously (or at least quite uncomfortably) and without an ongoing process in place to confront such challenging concerns. As no approach was made to Rockaway residents prior to the creation of the coalition, they had no input into

the Coalition's initial goals and structures, and most of the Rockaway residents who played a role in PRYSE only became aware of the Coalition after it was already set up and sought to recruit them as participants in existing plans, mainly by training them to behave as professionals themselves. PRYSE lacked a budget for staff (beyond consultants and evaluators) dedicated solely to PRYSE, and thus could not hire residents who worked for it. The gap between the employed and the community volunteers was never successfully bridged and served to alienate many volunteers.

The research on philanthropic-sponsored CCIs as presented in Chapter 8 indicates that *without a political strategy, systematic change in even one neighborhood is not possible*. However, the SS/HS program did not address political will or political strategy, except to offer consultants for technical assistance to redirect conflict when it arose at a site. The research suggests that, given a different beginning and an adequate planning period before the beginning of programming activity, at least some of the CBOs involved in PRYSE could have been instrumental in crafting a political strategy for the Coalition on behalf of the neighborhood, thus breathing life into the CCI model and exploiting its full potentials. This was almost impossible with PRYSE, however, as the money had been doled out and budgeted and the concepts prepared as an initial *fait accompli*. But more than that, the will around the Steering Committee table was rarely understood as political. Rather, "politics" were something to avoid, even as we embraced them in the tacit sense of maneuvering and favor-winning. With Weed & Seed and the HCAP-funded Rockaway Health Alliance, there was a little more flexibility in that non-profits and organized groups of community residents (like the tenants' councils) could be consulted to decide how some of the funds were spent.

In essence, PRYSE fell apart after the money ran out. Among its failures, it alienated a number of active community members and provided false hopes, particularly for those least-resourced groups in the neighborhood, which were then disappointed. It also saw racial tensions that went unacknowledged and unresolved. PRYSE did not morph into a non-profit because the people who were most involved had arrived as and continued to work as career professionals already committed to institutional employers; and, by and large, they also did not live in the neighborhood in which the initiative was rooted. Their organizations came in with their own pre-conceived agendas and motivation for participation, lacking incentive for true coalition, looking for what they decided in advance to be their own interests. Those with the most capital from the outset, social, cultural, political and financial, dominated whatever agenda the Coalition developed on its own, even while they were trying to mobilize the community. The lack of practical unity around a shared vision (beyond in spirit), the knowledge that sustainability was failing, and the divide between professionals and volunteers all encouraged tendencies to career opportunism, of which we saw a few examples in Chapter 5. At least some of the employed experts may have in the end viewed PRYSE as a station on their resume.

Insofar as youth in this context were mobilized into participation, they were considered as potential street-level bureaucrats of their own, who should be socialized to act much as the professionals of the intervention acted: the youth served through the NYPD were being trained to be young officers; the youth served through the mediation organization were a combination of young social workers and lawyers engaging in mediation at every turn; the youth trained through others programs were to become

entrepreneurs, to conduct educational theater on social problems, to become young mentors themselves. While these goals are not negative on the whole, they do foreclose on other possible avenues to develop youth potential and skill. They avoided activism in favor of bureaucratic training.

To return to Pavlich's (1996) question with regard to whether programs promising government-community partnership expand or can also serve to limit state control (in the sense of a governmentality analysis), and his particular insight that governmental rationality may not only involve "*techniques of discipline* but also *techniques of self*" (emphasis in original, p. 714), neither the interactions between criminal justice system and community residents (youth and adult), nor those between the community mediation group and youth and adult residents covered in this dissertation provide evidence of a simple expansion of state control. One of the threads that stands out in the PRYSE case history is how the sheer number of professionals, managers and "street level bureaucrats" often outnumbered the adult community residents at PRYSE events and interventions, let alone the youth, who were usually either absent or present only as a condition of school attendance. Another is that while SS/HS was intended to increase the access of the participating public health, mediation and justice groups to students in the educational system, open that system and bring about reforms, PRYSE accomplished little there as the school system for the most part remained its own closed world (and its lack of engagement in PRYSE from the beginning served as perhaps the most important of the Coalition's fatal flaws).

If alternatively we conceive governmentality in this case as the state using informal means to extend its reach, influence and discipline on residents of public

housing projects, schools or impoverished neighborhoods in Rockaway, in fact only a very small proportion were significantly “reached” by PRYSE; belying the initial ambitious statements of Brenda Z. and others that the Coalition would “change the culture” of the Rockaways. Rather than conditioning residents in governmentality, PRYSE was usually chasing after them to participate; although it should be noted that the actual Coalition participants, those who were paid to be part of the initiative, were *those who were most significantly shaped by the experience*. Nevertheless, as to most of their organizations PRYSE was a means of funding, the initiative did not turn into an integrated strategy, whether of culture-changing, neighborhood-building, or governmentality. Other cases, like the Rockaway Weed & Seed, perhaps assisted by the simpler mission and strategy of extending police control, tell a more explicit story of attempting to recruit residents as willing, autonomous tools of the means of control; also, the present conclusion relates to the PRYSE Coalition rather than to the large governmental institutions partnered in it (like the police, criminal justice and education systems) as wholes. Nevertheless, the case of PRYSE *as coalition*, at least, is more evidence for an ineffectuality thesis (or of a band-aid justifying the general abandonment of public ideals and obligations) than of a remote-control governance.¹⁷²

Professionals and Grassroots Participation – Limits and Potentials

Who was “the community” in Rockaway? Were Reverend Cassius’s “people in the basements” more “the community” than the few professionals around the table who lived in Rockaway? Were the African American elder women from the Ocean Bay

¹⁷² Thanks again to Paul Attewell for helpful discussions on this set of issues.

Community Development Corporation more representative of Rockaway than the Hassidic residents who never participated in the first place? Clearly, none of these groups or representatives can be considered a “true” and essential community, but the fact remains that the goal of the initiative was to reduce violence *among youth attending schools and living on the peninsula*. The relatively small minority of young people most impacted by violent behavior (either through victimization or by their own actions) were those from the housing developments, the places housing families with the least human capital and resources, and those who bear more of the burden of social problems in Rockaway and other urban neighborhoods like it. It may be very challenging to secure participation from residents in such a position, but initiatives that intend to promote change in those neighborhoods will never succeed without making such an effort. Again, having representatives from every group may be impossible, but the invitation to participate is critical to success.

It is well-documented by evaluators as well as scholars of community partnership work that “government bureaucracies and even professional social service agencies have not done enough to reach out to grass roots organizations and community leaders in low income, high-crime neighborhoods” (Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 189). But it is equally relevant and documented that not everyone believes community participation to be as useful, easy or desirable in community change work as the rhetoric of partnership implies. Rosenbaum (looking specifically at anti-crime partnerships) includes among the limits of community participation *as reported by professionals and government representatives* a long list of reservations that are worth quoting at length, as they resonate with the experience of the PRYSE coalition:

- Getting community members to participate in anti-crime programs, especially in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods, is extremely difficult due to feelings of hopelessness and despair, fear of retaliation, deep-seated distrust of government agencies and the police in particular, and the widespread effects of poverty on human functioning.
- Those who do participate do not necessarily represent “the community.” They are more likely to be civic-minded “do-gooders.” Communities are not homogeneous, and the leaders of different factions will compete for legitimacy and power, making it difficult to determine who should be invited to the partnership.
- Having professionals and grass roots representatives at the same table is problematical because of their incompatible styles of work and philosophies of intervention. Professionals, who attend meetings daily, tend to dominate the discussion. Nonprofessionals want immediate action without much research or planning.
- Agency representatives tend to complain that having the community involved requires a large partnership, which is inherently dysfunctional and very slow to act. Partnership efficiency requires that the group be “lean and mean” rather than democratic.
- Partnership members need to discuss confidential information about neighborhood problems, troubled families, and troubled individuals. Community members cannot have access to this type of information without violating individual privacy.
- Many problems can be solved without the involvement of citizens. Police departments, relying on police records, have engaged in extensive problem-solving activities (2002, pp. 189-190).

Rosenbaum concludes this review of limits by pointing out that it is also well known that when it comes to partnerships dominated by law enforcement officials, law enforcement strategies will dominate as solutions to public safety-related neighborhood concerns, even when other strategies may be more effective. In addition, partnerships dominated by law enforcement, and, I would argue, other criminal justice representatives such as prosecutors, will encourage citizen

participation *only as extensions of themselves*, as was the case with Weed & Seed. Asking community residents to become the “eyes and ears” of law enforcement is anathema to building community trust (Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 191).

As Rosenbaum notes in his overview of the evaluation of collaborative anti-crime partnerships, organizational reform may need to precede true partnerships, particularly when criminal justice agencies are partners:

In policing, for example, rigid hierarchical bureaucracies, alienated police cultures, and political agendas limit the organization's ability to interact with other organizations and the community with openness, equality, and responsiveness (see Greene, 2000, and Rosenbaum et al., 1998, as cited by Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 188).

But even partnerships not dominated by law enforcement have had difficulties in bringing community representatives to the table; Rosenbaum cites a 1992 survey of 1,650 coalitions that found that “only 35% involved the target population in the coalition” (pp. 191-192). Even when community members are included, there is no guarantee that everyone around the table will be aware or knowledgeable of the vast possibilities for initiatives, strategies and programs that can improve neighborhood quality of life. Rosenbaum argues that this reality reinforces the “need for researchers and policy experts” in planning community change efforts because, he says, rational thinking does not always prevail (p. 190). He fails to acknowledge, however, that even with researchers and policy experts present, rational thinking is not guaranteed, nor necessarily the only path to community problem solving. Nonetheless, Rosenbaum’s point is well taken that experts can be a true resource for advancing community change agendas.

As I've noted repeatedly, Rockaway residents – from the housing developments to those few among the professionals who live and work in the area – were not the only ones to be disillusioned or drained in the course of PRYSE. Apart from the program manager, who was leaving at the end of the project, my other interviewees from funded agencies were disheartened and dispirited. In fact, the very last steering committee meeting in December 2004 found people openly expressing how depressed, disappointed and even angry they were that after all the years of work and effort, only a handful of us had shown up, and then not one of us lived in the neighborhood. After the meeting, one of the funded partner staff would tell me, in all seriousness, about her plan to leave her position in the coming months, on the heels of Brenda Z.'s departure, that, "Anybody who cared is gone; you have to leave or it will kill you." To the extent that we failed to achieve all we had wanted to achieve, the initiative may have taken something away from the momentum for change among these professionals. The sense that many resources had been deployed, but that the efforts of the Coalition were in the end rather ineffectual at changing the conditions of existence on the peninsula in tangible ways, left the professionals feeling exhausted, even if they had been well-compensated.

Some of the PRYSE participants were Lipsky's (1980) "street-level bureaucrats," the lived interface between citizens and government, implementing policy. But in PRYSE, as with the other CCIs with which I worked, the majority of the professionals at the table were removed from street-level. They were managers of activities. This is why I have stressed the conclusion that insofar as the state "governs at a distance" in CCIs like PRYSE, it actually governs the professionals and encourages community members to emulate them, and so reflects a move toward the professionalization of community. In

this view, professionals are called to implement policy by socializing others to implement policy, including youth (to become police officers, to mediate disputes, to learn social science skills to campaign against alcohol and tobacco, to dress for success). We were paid to extend the reach of the state by training others to extend the reach of the state, but in the meantime, the people targeted by the policy were only marginally impacted, and in limited numbers. To the extent that initiatives such as PRYSE are responsabilization strategies, the people made responsible are the professionals, which is why my informant above felt that her choice was to leave or die.

It is also true that those of us around the Coalition table may have increased our own professional capacity. But the youth who were meant to be the focus of the efforts were served directly by agencies, and even by the Coalition in festival-type activities, but they did not come to the table as leaders and their absence was palpable from beginning to end. In hindsight, it is easy to say that the youth who were intended to be the focus of the project should have been the focus of the project. But that would have required a rethinking and redirection of all of the work of the Coalition. In the case of PRYSE, comprehensiveness translated into superficiality. In a coalition whose professional participants arrived at the table with a great deal of cultural capital relative to the local teenagers, more focus on the development, discovery and nurturing of youth leadership in the neighborhoods most impacted by violence could have served as the most important centerpiece.¹⁷³

This is not to say that comprehensiveness should be lost – surely institutions are as interconnected and interdependent as the social problems they seek to address – but

¹⁷³ Notwithstanding the Rockaway Youth Leadership Council of ten students organized by the community mediation group through PRYSE to consider how to improve their community (see Chapter 7), which pointed to what should have been a far larger, broader-based and sustained effort on the Coalition's part.

that it is better to acknowledge the limitations on goals that can be achieved with very limited resources, so as to avoid repeat disappointment of communities that already bear a high burden of it. Bringing together well-resourced agencies with grassroots CBOs means creating an opportunity for conflicts to emerge, and in the case of PRYSE, the conflict had the potential to be very productive, to interrogate or at least give an uncomfortable visibility to unspoken assumptions and values, as when the Reverend Cassius would remind everyone that we were failing to reach the people who most needed the resources that our organizations could provide. His politics of opposition were only one way to confront the challenges that emerged, though he came to command respect and attention, even as he drove people to exasperation. Jack P., long-time resident, community activist and human rights worker, was able to use a politics of engagement with the school district representative who threatened to tell the new superintendent to reject our Coalition if we publicized our data from parents about their view of the local schools. He artfully brought us back into dialogue when division could have resulted.

Unfortunately, no one challenged the initial call of the project manager who said that the goal of PRYSE was to “change the culture of the Rockaways,” when only attention to changing the structure (along with a different, less neoliberal approach to “culture”) of the Rockaways would have permitted real inclusiveness in the effort. While some may question the value of direct community control of a federally funded initiative, it is hard to imagine how such an initiative can be designed for success in the absence of at least some representative community (and in this case, youth) input in the planning.

The inclusion of other organizations and institutions could have changed the tenor of the initiative. For instance, the Coalition never invited labor groups to participate (and as we saw earlier this was, and remains a flaw in SS/HS itself, after the failure to include the Labor Department as one of the participating federal agencies). Labor organizations could have brought to bear a more openly political pose, along with insights into the broader politics and challenges of employment on the peninsula and beyond. Groups that were already operating with federal funding on the peninsula, such as HOPE VI and Weed & Seed, but also groups such as the Tenants' Councils clearly needed to come together prior to beginning a coalition. On a peninsula as small but also as divided as Rockaway, only coalitional activity may be enough to leverage resources for change and get grassroots as well as professional community participation at the same time.

To Begin Again – Advice to a Future Rockaway CCI

With all that in mind, if we were to begin again, these are the key recommendations I would offer to anyone attempting to craft a CCI on the Rockaway peninsula:

1. Coalitions must pre-exist grant funding, or an advance period of coalition-building must be funded.
2. If the coalition does not precede the funding, then a long advance period of community organizing and of planning with significant, transparent, and public input from the community who are to be impacted by the initiative must be a funded activity for coalition building. (So far this much is also reflected in the Promise Neighborhoods plan.)
3. The inclusion of organized labor should be strongly considered as coalitions are formed.

4. If local education agencies are included, they must not only be given incentive to participate but also be subject to true community accountability. (Neither was really the case with PRYSE; in fact, the latter is not the case in New York or most other cities.)
5. Community participation must be a goal and one that shapes an entire project, not just pieces of funded programs. If a community's children are a focus of change and programming, parental input must also be prioritized and compensated. Similarly, if youth are at the center of the goals, then their leadership must be prioritized at the center of the initiative. Coalitions should not be built with community-themed visions and missions that do not bring to bear accountability for representation of people living in, and affected by, the programs implemented.
6. Community volunteers cannot be asked to contribute unpaid labor even as funded partners are paid to engage in similar work. Those who do work should be compensated. (This is also a minor but not insignificant economic development measure.)
7. A political strategy, and organizations that will willingly commit to one, must be central to the work of any coalition seeking change on the peninsula.
8. If real grassroots or local groups are to be included, funding expectations must either be clear from the outset, or fronted to the groups that cannot afford to front it themselves.
9. Criminal justice system participation needs to be rethought, with a strong view toward not including it, particularly as it may compromise opportunities for community justice as well as restorative justice.
10. A thoughtful assessment of the capacity of each participating organization is necessary to avoid the inequalities of scale of the largest organizations.
11. Address real social issues directly including long-standing turf issues, class disparities and race, among others.

First, Do No (More) Harm: End the War on Drugs

With the release of 2010 Census data, changing trends in the Rockaways must be considered to understand how its constituent neighborhoods have fared in the last decade,

particularly in light of the economic downturn following the collapse of the housing bubble starting in August 2007 and still continuing today. We would expect the Rockaways to have suffered a disproportionate share of negative effects, particularly from the subprime mortgage crisis. As its “conditions of existence” get that more difficult, it is certainly my hope for Rockaway and all other areas so affected that cities, states and our society can begin to turn away from heavy reliance on the criminal justice system to solve all of society’s problems.

There are signs that this is in fact happening – even plans by the new governor of New York to close a few prisons – but it may be much too soon to see any impact on the ground in places like Rockaway (see Vera Institute of Justice, October 2010). This dissertation examined the costs to society of substituting experiments in criminal justice (whether these are termed as community partnerships or not) for social welfare programs at length in Chapters 6 and 7 and the subsequent Excursus. There is no need to repeat here at length the conclusions from those chapters, except to reiterate that “target” schools in impoverished majority African American or Latino neighborhoods should no longer be “governed through crime,” or used as sites for implementing cutting-edge policing strategies, when there are clearly more humane alternatives that social science has so far found to assure safer schools and healthier students.

Nonetheless, one aspect of this complex of issues has not been addressed here explicitly. At the federal level, since the Obama administration took office, a slight turn from the “war on drugs” (though no true indication of an end to the “war on crime”) is, at least in rhetoric, coming to pass. In May 2009, the Obama administration’s new drug czar, Gil Kerlikowske, in his first interview after being announced as the head of the

White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), said that the administration intended to abandon the notion of conducting a “war on drugs” because the analogy was counterproductive to the public health approach that the administration had embraced (Fields, 2009). Relying more on treatment than on incarceration as the solution to the problem of illicit substance use and abuse, the ONDCP released a National Drug Control Strategy in 2010 that emphasized the risk and protective factor approach via comprehensive community prevention initiatives as among its central approaches, but also includes more promising efforts such as promoting and supporting alternatives to incarceration for substance abusers. Again, it remains to be seen whether this turn from “war” will continue to see reductions in the numbers of people cycled through prison, but it would be meaningful in Rockaway, a neighborhood hard-hit by the war on drugs.

In fact, the decades-long disastrous impact of prohibition, especially of marijuana; of criminalization of some drugs but not others, with no apparent relation to the harms they cause; and of the “war” mentality in dealing with the illegal drug trade are among the obvious, if until now unstated, themes that have emerged herein. The drug war is a significant factor contributing to many of problems that neither CCIs nor anything else can solve, as long as already vulnerable people are subject to arrest and possible entry to a criminal justice treadmill for “crimes” like smoking “marijuana in public view”; as long as law enforcement and its surveillance apparatus must bloat to the size required by the criminalization of extremely common (and largely harmless) individual activities, constantly extending their reach over the vulnerable and swallowing resources that could be better invested elsewhere; and as long as a few among the economically deprived discover that the best jobs or business opportunities available to them, albeit rather

dangerous occupations, are as sellers of illegal substances with exorbitant profit margins – assuming they can capture territory, with the inevitable violence and collateral damage to communities that this entails. The costs are staggering for the victims of addiction, for the residents of places like Rockaway, and for the nation as a whole. Again this issue did not start out as a subject of this dissertation, and would require its own volumes to explicate (although these have already been written); but it is impossible, finally, to avoid the conclusion of the single easiest available measure to help the neighborhoods and population groups that well-intentioned CCIs and CBOs seek to target: First, mobilize to get the state to stop doing the daily harm that comes with the “War on Drugs.”

How far will we go not to face up to inequality?

The list of recommendations above might have improved a coalition like PRYSE, if their adoption had even been possible; but would also have been more cost-intensive, and (we should hope) conducted over a longer term, so that people are not mobilized for a later disappointment. Where does the money come from? The question is as unavoidable as it is usually untreated. Non-profit professionals and evaluation researchers are accustomed to turning to government, corporations and philanthropy when they offer funding to address social problems via a competitive process, and leave it to these powerful institutions to decide when and how such offers are extended. Some of us may influence but almost none of us choose when the money is offered, how much or under what conditions. We adapt to those conditions. As with the war on drugs, to ask this question moves us beyond the bounds of this dissertation – wherein we have considered what makes an effective initiative to address poverty, on the CCI model or

otherwise – and into larger matters of our society’s priorities and values as a whole, the big and perennial questions of local and national politics: How much are we willing to spend and to what ends? How much are taxpayers willing to pay? Who *are* the taxpayers, what share of the cost of addressing social problems should each group in society carry? What are the means by which these priorities are established, justified, and changed?

Although at its advent the present economic crisis was widely seen as the end of neoliberalism and a global failure of uncontrolled free-market capitalism, the time since has found government spending to bail out Wall Street banks, unemployment still high, state budgets in danger of collapsing, inequality growing, “big government” cast in the familiar role of the true villain, politicians still unwilling to challenge 30 years of tax policies that favor the rich, and nonprofits concerned that they may not yet have felt the full impact of the economic crisis. All this cannot but matter to the subjects we have examined here.

In the course of my research in finalizing this work, I recently came across a new up-and-coming model for funding social programming initiatives, that almost serves as a parable for the most extreme rendering of “Third Way” optimism and reliance on the will of the rich and supposed mechanisms of the market: the “social impact bond.” Already being tried out in the UK and under consideration for New South Wales, this new form of equity investment (called a bond for convenience) is “in effect a contract between private investors and government” (Perkins, 2011). The idea is attracting enough attention in policy and academic circles that its proposal in the United States seems inevitable. In May 2010 a strategic dialogue was sponsored by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

and “Tamarack – An Institute for Community Engagement in Canada” to explore new place-based poverty reduction strategies. Social impact bonds were promoted as a resource for this agenda.

Now bear with me as we introduce this new discussion belatedly, as it is helpful to our conclusion. Here is a brief summary of how social impact bonds are supposed to work: When people run into deep troubles, the kind that result in victimization, incarceration, institutionalization, hospitalization or long-term unemployment, the costs to the public sector are great. Maximizing the prevention of such cases would therefore result in saved expenditures amounting to many times the cost of the preventive measures; assuming these preventive measures actually work. Social impact bonds are based on a calculation of this difference by the government (or potentially another overseeing entity). Investors are encouraged to buy the bonds with the resulting funds used to finance organizations (non-profits, for example) that conduct preventive measures. Targets are set in advance to determine the effectiveness of these preventive measures. If the targets are not met, the investment is lost, and presumably no one will want to buy bonds in that particular non-profit or type of program again. If the targets are met, the public sector is considered to have saved a multiple of what the bonds actually cost (based on the initial calculation of the difference in cost between prevention and intervention). From this assumed saving, the bonds are paid off by the government at a profit to the bond buyer. A market is created wherein investing in preventive measures makes dollars and sense.

Why doesn't the government invest in the preventive measures in the first place, both saving the later intervention expenditures and obviating the need to pay off any

social impact bonds? This question is begged in the treatments I have so far seen, but from the logic as invoked so far, the answer surely would be that the market over time would more efficiently reward what works and root out what doesn't, producing a more successful and widespread prevention of social problems over time. Supporters might also argue that a profit mechanism will more readily attract money that voters don't want to see come out of their taxes.

The UK pilot case involves issuance of social impact bonds to finance a recidivism prevention program including job and training measures for 3,000 inmates sentenced to less than one year at Peterborough Prison. Investors, drawn together by Social Finance, an "ethical investment bank," invested 5 million pounds that could potentially leave them with 8 million pounds from the government and lottery funds if the organizations that will provide social services to those incarcerated can demonstrate a decrease in recidivism over the expected rate ("Private backers," BBC News, 2010). If the three groups funded to support prisoners can produce such a decrease of 7.5%, then the investors will be rewarded with a profit, so rather than donating to charity, they are investors in prevention.

Left unexamined in the media reports on social impact bonds are the implications of turning the lives of people leaving prison and the nonprofits that provide social services to them into investment vehicles. We recall how people who were known to not have the means to sustain mortgages at subprime conditions were nevertheless aggressively recruited for them by banks that needed more material for packaged securities. One cannot help but wonder if a derivatives market in social impact bonds will also be tolerated as an acceptable form of hedging the risk? What prompted the

question in the title of this section is that social impact bonds seem to offer a new extreme in the perpetual effort to continue conceiving finance models for social welfare based on attracting the money of those who have it toward profitable outlets, rather than even considering a return to the traditional means for paying for social welfare, that of taxing the wealthy, that had also worked to ameliorate wealth inequality in the postwar history of the industrial nations until the advent of neoliberalism. It seems the government and the non-profit sector prefer to beg for grants and investments, rather than demand the wealthy pay a proper share of maintaining social security in a society that has rewarded them so well.

Economic Development and the Inevitability of Big Questions

We end with the related question of economic development. Despite its key importance (and just as importantly, of the *type* of economic development) toward ameliorating, let alone resolving, any of the root problems we at PRYSE were meant to address, our consideration of it was minimal at best. In practice, a “change the culture” approach as applied to development will tend to be limited in the best case to better socializing a higher proportion of the residents (the local human resources) into suitable candidates for jobs. But while this may make an important difference, as one factor of many, in attracting capital to a place, in itself it does not bring or create the jobs, or find a place, a role, a strategy for those less able or unwilling to be so socialized. (In the end, *all* populations will have a theoretical median and a lower end in measurements of “job suitability.”)

Perhaps we at PRYSE didn't give the question sufficient consideration because it was not a factor under our control, and also not one in which we would have been considered expert.¹⁷⁴ Those of us around the table might come up with ideas for soliciting funds for projects, but we didn't command investment capital. Under the present economic order, with very few exceptions, new economic development in an area comes with the arrival of privately-owned capital that gravitates toward outlets perceived to be most likely to return profit. This capital tends to determine for itself the form of development it will bring, and controls how profit is reinvested (always, and generally as a fiduciary responsibility, with more profit in mind). Governments at all levels generally seem to have accepted that their role is to create the best possible conditions for attracting said capital, with training (or cultural) measures as a secondary detail in fiscal and budgetary terms compared to tax breaks, subsidies, zoning changes and acceptance of infrastructural and externalized costs. As long as this paradigm holds sway, and direct public sector investment in productive activity is considered anathema, it is questionable whether sustainable prosperity can come to places like the neighborhoods on the Eastern end of the Rockaways, short of a gentrification that represents a type of place-based development, but displaces many or most of the people who live there today.

And yet Rockaway is already ripe with non-monetary wealth in the form of miles of beachfront land, open skies and views of Manhattan. The other many million residents of the New York metropolitan area, one of the world's largest, might again be beckoned by bridge over Jamaica Bay or via the land connection to Nassau. The many empty lots

¹⁷⁴ Notwithstanding the participation of the Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation, who however were largely passive partners in the Coalition and, for example, did not propose ideas for how the Coalition might help promote economic development in the community. Their funded programs offered entrepreneur training for teenagers, a variation on the approach of enhancing the cultural capital of individuals, which in itself is a good, but not a community development plan.

remaining on the peninsula have the potential for relatively low-cost acquisition and development. Rockaway was once a recreation destination, but now even those who live there bemoan the lack of recreational opportunity. If the capital for alternative forms of development were available, it is not difficult to imagine any number of projects, risky and not necessarily high-return, with potentials nevertheless for improving quality of life, increasing economic self-sufficiency, providing jobs in the neighborhoods (i.e., for people living there now), and even, possibly, producing profit. Where, for example, is the capital to develop small farms and community gardens, solar power fields, or other small-scale production for local use in the empty lots of Rockaway? But to ask such a question is, in a sense, to go beyond present reality (or “realism”), because it doesn’t seem to be written into our political economy’s current programming. An easy, small and practical question seems to become radical, because it leads to a big, hard one, once again, beyond this paper’s scope: What kind of society would prioritize such projects, how would capital be mobilized accordingly, and (assuming we want to) how would we get there?

As at many other points in this narrative where we have been forced to consider sweeping, city-wide, national or general social or economic developments whose impacts were also felt in the places, on the institutions and in the events spoken to herein, my point now is that the most just, brilliantly envisioned, carefully planned, comprehensive and integrated; the most effective in mobilizing resources and popular participation and support; the most charismatically led, fairly balanced between dedicated professionals and committed grass roots activists, and even well-financed community initiatives in the world are still only particles swept up within far larger movements that may render their

activities moot. These “movements” are largely determined by human agency, but not in the hands of the many. Although “big questions” of social structure should never keep us from seeing and taking small and sensible steps when available, there is no way to avoid them, and the insight that sometimes the smallest, simplest, most modest beginning possible for real change requires us to imagine, demand and create a different world altogether.

APPENDIX A

SS/HS and PRYSE – Timeline

The following timeline sketches major events and developments during the PRYSE initiative in the Rockaways within the larger context of the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) program.

1998 – 1999 The Safe Schools/Healthy Students concept is developed by high-level advisers to the White House and the federal cabinet as a proposed “unprecedented collaboration” among three departments: Education, Justice, Health and Human Services. SS/HS is intended to respond to school violence by funding local partnerships across the nation of schools, police, and mental health services, with the participation of community groups and residents (see Chapter 1).

The country is preoccupied with a seemingly unprecedented series of rampage mass-killing incidents by students with firearms at several schools around the nation.

1999

February Cabinet-level officials announce plans to go forward with SS/HS as a federal program to fund local initiatives against youth violence. The responsible agencies at the federal level will be OJJDP (Justice), OSDHS (Education), and CMHS (Health and Human Services).

April The original SS/HS request for proposals is published in the Federal Register. Proposals were required to involve local-site partnerships of schools, law enforcement, and health services, and to include an Evaluation Team and a plan for community participation at each site.

In the Rockaways, Gale Brewer and Brenda Z. initiate the proposal for a “Project for Rockaway Youth in Safety and Education.” Over the next two months they bring together the eventual partners in the PRYSE Coalition.

Several of the partners are among those required by SS/HS:

- Local school district, Community School District 27, which is to act as the fiscal agent;
- Two NYPD precincts and the office of the Queens District Attorney, representing law enforcement;
- Evaluation Team of professional social scientists, recruited from Baruch College;
- The federally-funded “Family Health Clinic” as the required local mental-health services provider; FHC also serves as the administrative

body for the project as a whole.

Other partners include “The Community Mediation Organization, Inc.,” “The Ministers Coalition” of Inwood and Far Rockaway, Bank Street College of Education, Rockaway Development and Revitalization Corporation, and Federated Employment and Guidance Services (see Chapter 3).

- April 19** The massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Among other measures in response, Congress votes \$100 million in funding for SS/HS.
- June 1** The PRYSE proposal is submitted to SS/HS.
- September** PRYSE is among the first projects to be approved for an SS/HS grant and, in fact, is awarded the highest amount of any site nationwide (\$8.4 million over three years). The author is hired as a member of the Evaluation Team.

2000

- April** An SS/HS grant for \$8.4 million in federal funding for PRYSE is made official, with funds available starting in June.
- June** The PRYSE Coalition holds its first public meeting, attended by about 90 people, to introduce the initiative to the Rockaways community. The start date for its activities on the ground is set for September 1, 2000.
- An effort to include the Labor Department as a fourth federal partner in SS/HS fails after requisite funding is removed from a House bill.
- July** The PRYSE Coalition holds a second public meeting.
- September** The first four standing committees of PRYSE are formed. These are:
- Community and School Safety;
 - Educational and School Initiatives;
 - Community Development;
 - Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support.

The author is assigned to represent the Evaluation Team on the Community and School Safety committee, which meets regularly through late 2002 but cannot sustain its initial effectiveness, especially when school principals stop attending the meetings.

- October** The PRYSE Steering Committee and the other standing committees convene for the first time officially. Thereafter the committees

generally meet on a monthly basis.

November (to Jan 2001) After delays, Community School District 27 for the first time begins disbursing SS/HS funds to PRYSE partners.

December New York City issues a request for proposals for “Arverne by the Sea,” leading to groundbreaking for development in the Arverne Urban Renewal Area by 2002.

2001

January The killing of highly regarded 17-year-old Thomas Johnson in Arverne in the course of a minor dispute prompts a series of community town hall meetings in the Rockaways (see Chapter 4).

With Peninsula Hospital no longer in the PRYSE Coalition, funds are reallocated to a PRYSE marketing campaign and consultations.

The PRYSE Social Marketing Committee meets starting in early 2001 (through June 2002).

March Rick H., the original CSD 27 liaison to PRYSE, is either fired or removes himself from Coalition meetings. There will be no active replacement before September.

With conflicts about the Coalition’s aims and forms of management coming to a head and impinging on its work, PRYSE Program Manager Brenda Z. calls in federal consultant/brokers for advice.

May PRYSE secures Neighborhood Development Area funding to hold a gangs alternative seminar for young people.

June A parents’ retreat organized in the wake of the Thomas Johnson killing is held at York College and partly financed with funds secured by PRYSE.

Management and leadership consultant Eric H. comes to PRYSE to hold consulting sessions based on the “ARIA” principles (“authority, resources, information, accountability” – and discipline).

PRYSE submits its first annual report to SS/HS and the federal program officer, citing achievements of four kinds.

September 11 “Nine-Eleven” The World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan is targeted and destroyed in an attack using two hijacked airliners as missiles, with additional strikes on the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania. The number of dead and

missing in New York City is ultimately estimated at about 2,800 people from as many as 80 nations, of whom 343 were New York City firefighters and 66 were officers of the NYPD or Port Authority police, or employees of the city's Emergency Medical Services. A disproportionate number of the fallen firefighters and police officers resided with their families in the Rockaways, where at least 75 of the dead are mourned, most of them first responders who had lived in the peninsula's West End neighborhoods.

Fall 2001 Several months after Rick H.'s departure, Wayne G. begins attending PRYSE meetings as the new liaison from the school district.

The PRYSE Web site is launched.

The Evaluation Team initiates the first in a series of three annual random telephone surveys of 903 peninsula residents. The Community and School Safety committee meanwhile devises and conducts its own questionnaire survey at community meetings, in part as an outreach tool.

PRYSE hires a grant writer and a communications consultant.

November 12 Moments after takeoff from JFK airport, American Airlines Flight 587 to the Dominican Republic crashes into the Belle Harbor neighborhood on the Rockaway peninsula, killing all of the 260 people on board and 5 people on the ground, and causing a row of houses to burn down. The accident revives the trauma of September 11th for neighborhoods that had already lost many of their own. The Family Health Clinic is active in providing bereavement services and reports this activity back to SS/HS.

2002

January The PRYSE Steering Committee holds a public meeting meant as a "report to the community," also in honor of outgoing Queens Borough President Claire Shulman.

February A Steering Committee meeting considers the danger that PRYSE will not gain or "leverage" the financial resources required to sustain it past the end of the funded period in July 2003.

March The Family Health Clinic and other PRYSE partners participate in an application for a federally-funded Healthy Communities Access Program (HCAP), leading to the creation of the Rockaway Health Alliance in October.

An outside marketing consultant conducts a focus group to help devise a public relations campaign for PRYSE using a logo and signature song. He finds that the focus group participants already have strong opinions about PRYSE and many other matters.

Spring Principals decline participation in a representative school survey planned by the PRYSE Evaluation Team, as do many parents, who sum up their perspective by saying, “Our kids are studied to death.”

April Resident and activist Jack P. of the Community Development Committee issues a critique of PRYSE as unresponsive to its community clients. As a result, the Coalition holds what will turn out to be its only evening meeting.

April to May On behalf of PRYSE, the author organizes and co-conducts focus groups with a total of 41 young people from a Rockaway school, including 13 girls and 28 boys.

October The new partnership with the Family Health Clinic in the lead is awarded the sought-after HCAP grant. Maggie M., who had worked on SS/HS in another school district, is hired to serve as project manager of the new, HCAP-financed Rockaway Health Alliance.

2003

Spring PRYSE applies for and receives a “no-cost extension” of its SS/HS mandate for an additional unfunded year, until June 2004.

June The original three-year funding period for PRYSE ends on June 30. The PRYSE Coalition partners have implemented 42 programs, 20 of them directly serving youth, operating out of a reported 77 sites on the peninsula, including 12 schools (two high schools). The PRYSE Progress Report for January 1 to June 30 reads: “We have come to recognize that our work as a coalition must be ‘vision driven’ rather than ‘fund driven.’” But unfortunately the realities of no funding begin to override vision and the number of participants dwindles over the course of the next year.

PRYSE Coalition members begin receiving training from New York State Office of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism Services (OASAS) in the “Communities That Care” model. A representative from OASAS begins regularly attending PRYSE meetings, until the end of the project.

- June 2003 (cont'd)** The author receives a grant from the Children's Aid Society, through their connection to OASAS, to train five local teenagers in observation research for a project in which they will assess the number and locations of businesses selling alcohol.
- August** In the wake of a citywide schools reorganization that, among many other changes, redraws the Districts into larger Regions, Andre L. becomes the new liaison to PRYSE from the NYC Education Department.
- October** A high-ranking official from the new Department of Education Region 5 visits the Steering Committee and threatens to withdraw her support for PRYSE after she sees that an Evaluation Team survey asked parents to rate the safety of their children's schools. The resulting controversy is the first time that race is acknowledged openly as an issue in the Coalition's work.

2004

- April** The author attends the Safe Schools/Healthy Students National Conference where the speakers include J. Robert Flores, the Bush-appointed head of OJJDP, and William Modzeleski, one of the original architects of SS/HS under the Clinton administration.
- July** PRYSE holds a "Quo Vadis" meeting to consider possibilities for continuing the initiative as a non-profit organization.
- September** Almost all funds that PRYSE has secured for its activities since 2000 have run out.
- November** PRYSE Project Manager Brenda Z. accepts a new managerial position at a mental health services institution in Staten Island, effectively spelling the end of efforts to keep the PRYSE Coalition alive.
- Representatives of the Office of the US Attorney, New York Eastern District, accompany local police brass and the Weed & Seed managers to a meeting with the Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation and attempt to persuade 14 elderly African American women to act as informants on criminal activity in the projects (see Chapter 5).

2005

January A small group of representatives from what had been PRYSE, including the author, Oscar M. from the QDA, Andre L. from the Education Department, Tom H. from the mediation organization, and Maggie M. from the health center, consider plans to create a non-profit that takes over where PRYSE left off. A scheduled meeting is cancelled and the group never meets again.

APPENDIX B

People in PRYSE - Sketches

The following is a mostly anonymized listing of key actors in the PRYSE Coalition, mainly including those who took part as paid employees – who are grouped by partner organization – as well as a few of the volunteer citizen-participants from the community. These admittedly incomplete sketches are intended as a reference in reviewing the history of PRYSE in Chapters 3 to 6, and also serve to indicate the demographics among the Coalition’s decision-makers and most active participants (e.g., residency, organizational affiliation, profession and position, extent of employment outside Coalition activity or even outside the partner organization with which they were associated, and so forth). No extensive let alone quantitative survey of the PRYSE decision-makers themselves was conducted or considered a priority during the time of the Coalition, although the national evaluation did survey each program manager annually.

All personal and organizational information given in this dissertation, as well as the views and opinions attributed to various people, were obtained from the subjects under consent agreements, or were already available in the public domain prior to publication. The names of most of the people and of several of the non-governmental organizations have been anonymized (indicated by all caps) as a matter of courtesy and collegial respect, and as an admittedly minimal protection against search-based data mining. I have no interest in attaching plaudits or accusations to any individual involved in PRYSE, which now belongs to the historical record. My aim is to tell an unvarnished story of the initiative, noting its successes and failures, as an academic case study of interest to scholars and critics, and also of possible use to community organizers and activists, policy makers, project designers and evaluators. (See also the listing of organizations in Chapter 3, section: “The Partners in PRYSE”)

PEOPLE IN PRYSE

"The Family Health Clinic"

BRENDA Z., an academically trained social worker, was the primary organizer of the PRYSE application for an SS/HS grant, and took the lead (together with Gale Brewer) in bringing the Rockaway-based partnership together. Brenda is white, middle-aged and very involved in the Jewish community of Rockaway. The child of survivors of the Holocaust, Brenda brought a commitment to justice to her work. The Family Health Clinic had employed her for many years as the administrator for its mental health and community services in the Rockaways. At the time of the initiative, she lived in Belle Harbor – one of the wealthier western-end neighborhoods of the peninsula. She served PRYSE as chief administrator and project manager during its entire run. After the federal grant was exhausted, she led efforts for a time to continue the Coalition in the absence of funding. PRYSE effectively ground to a halt at the end of 2004, soon after she left for another job in Staten Island.

CATHY C., also employed by The Family Health Clinic, served as the PRYSE Coalition Coordinator for the first two years of the project. She lived nearby, in Nassau County. A middle-aged, African American woman who had worked in the community for several years, Cathy was the second to Brenda's leadership in the PRYSE Coalition as its Coordinator from its beginnings until 2003 when she suddenly left her position at the clinic. Her sudden departure after about two years was mysterious to other PRYSE participants because, at first, we were not even told that she was no longer employed by The Family Health Clinic. (Eventually we were told that she was fired after a "mental breakdown.")

MAGGIE M. was originally hired by The Family Health Clinic to manage another federal grant it had secured, the Community Access Project (CAP) aimed at improving health care access in Far Rockaway. A middle-aged white woman, she had, for several years before joining the clinic, worked on a SS/HS site in Nassau County. In part due to this experience, Maggie M. ended up doing a lot of work on PRYSE, whether she wanted to or not. She was also very active in Weed & Seed. This involvement also predated her employment by The Family Health Clinic, as the previous SS/HS site with which she worked was also closely connected to a Weed & Seed site. She was still at the Clinic when Brenda Z. left, but eventually also left to work in the courts in Nassau County, where she lived.

**Community School District 27 (CSD 27)
Later: New York City Department of Education (Region 5)**

CLORIS G. served CSD 27 out of Ozone Park as its director of special projects, of which PRYSE was only one of many. A middle-aged, white, Jewish woman, Cloris was initially not interested in participating in the SS/HS application. And although she eventually agreed to participate and was listed as the applicant in the SS/HS proposal and the CSD liaison to PRYSE, her other administrative burdens prevented her from taking on the task, which caused difficulties for the initiative. I first met her for an interview in October 2000. When Wayne G. was brought in as the PRYSE liaison, her involvement in the grant nearly evaporated, although she did work closely with Brenda Z. to submit bi-annual financial reports to "the feds." She left her position in June 2003 when the Department of Education was restructured into regions.

RICK H. was designated in June 2000 as the original liaison between CSD 27 and PRYSE but left relatively early in the process, in March 2001. A white, middle-aged Jewish resident of Rockaway Park, where he grew up, Rick was more of an activist than an advocate. This orientation would contribute to his being removed from his position with the school

district. He explained his departure by saying that, “I left working with PRYSE after a few months for what I thought were obvious reasons having to do with frustrations from School District 27’s perspective as to what my position and duties with regard to the initiative were.” Brenda Z. offered a different explanation for his departure, saying that he did not have the skills required of the position.

WAYNE G., a Caribbean black man in his 40s, replaced Rick H. as the CSD 27 liaison to PRYSE, but he also had other duties in his job with the schools system. He was transferred to CSD 27 from a position as a health educator with the Board of Education central office, and although he was hired in July 2001, because of delays in paperwork he did not begin working in the district until mid-September. As a PRYSE participant in the following two years, he co-chaired the Educational and School Initiatives Committee (along with Paul D. from the Queens Borough Public Library, see below), succeeding Helen J. in that role. He also became co-chair of the Communications Committee. Eventually, he would chair both committees. He also left PRYSE after the restructuring of the schools.

ANDRE L., an African American man in his 30s, began working as the NYC Education Department’s liaison to PRYSE in August 2003, in the course of the citywide school system reorganization. His title with the Department was Coordinator of External Programs in Region 5, which had absorbed the former community school districts 19, 23, and 27. Andre maintained close relationships with Oscar M. and Tom H. after the dissolution of PRYSE, as they had developed a program for young men in the schools that required no funding to continue.

“The Community Mediation Organization”

JOSH K., a white Jewish man in his 50s, and the founder and executive director of the non-profit Community Mediation Organization, was very involved in PRYSE, especially early on. He and Tom H. both came to meetings on a regular basis. An attorney who initially worked with the Legal Aid Society representing juveniles, Josh became frustrated with the court’s inability to successfully address the problems of the families he encountered, and became involved with mediation and conflict resolution, eventually founding the CMO. He was among the most influential members of the coalition, not only because his organization had received a significant portion of funds, but because he developed a very close working relationship with Brenda Z. and was a very vocal participant in the committees, one of which he chaired (the Community and School Safety Committee).

TOM H., associate executive director of the CMO, a social worker by training, was also highly involved in PRYSE committees and other activities. He was in his early 30s, African American and had grown up in New York City, but had not visited Rockaway until he began working with the mediation organization. He organized and managed the only programs that PRYSE would fund that focused on youth leadership. Along with Oscar and Andre, he started the only program that outlived PRYSE, the young men's empowerment initiative.

“The Ministers Coalition”

REV. CASSIUS C., who lived in Far Rockaway, was by far the most active participant from The Ministers Coalition and attended every PRYSE meeting. A former Black Nationalist leader in Belize and an admirer of Stokely Carmichael, he was the only regular PRYSE participant to be both a resident of the community *and* a member of one of the Coalition's funded organizations, and one of the few willing to brew controversy and openly pose uncomfortable questions. He consistently argued that there were actually not just two but many “Rockaways” – not just divisions of neighborhoods or communities by race, but also finer divisions by class, ethnicity, language and mental health.

Queens County District Attorney's Office (QDA)

OSCAR M. served QDA as the Community Coordinator for Special Prosecutions. A Puerto Rican man in his late 30s, he grew up in Brooklyn, lived in the Bronx and was one of the members of the Steering Committee who was actively involved in many PRYSE initiatives. He became the district attorney's primary contact to PRYSE, and PRYSE funds were used to hire him for this work, although he remained with the QDA after PRYSE ended. He attended most of the PRYSE meetings and would eventually partner with Tom H. (of the Community Mediation Organization) and Andre L. (of the School District) to conduct sessions at several peninsula high schools of what they called a “male empowerment group” treating issues of “fatherhood, manhood, literacy, education, history, financial, and sustainability.” Oscar M. lived in the Bronx and worked at the QDA offices in Kew Gardens.

ROGER P. was a white man in his 20s, hired through the QDA office, using PRYSE funds, as a community assistant to PRYSE. He worked mostly on the tennis event for the QDA and rarely attended PRYSE meetings. He did not live in the Rockaways.

JAMES S. was the Executive Assistant District Attorney involved in the PRYSE effort. An African American man in his late 50s, he saw his role in his career as providing “gentle indoctrination” to the youth they encountered to avoid violence as a means to solving problems. James

attended only a handful of PRYSE events over the years, but his influence, particularly over the community assistants was clear, especially when I conducted bi-annual interviews with all of the staff at the QDA, as he was their supervisor.

REBECCA J. was the Supervising Assistant District attorney also working with the PRYSE coalition. Although initially she was highly involved in committee work, eventually Oscar M. would replace her at most meetings and events. An African American woman in her 40s, she was often involved in representing the QDA at community-wide events, particularly when controversies arose between law enforcement and community residents. She did not live in the Rockaways.

FRED F. was the Assistant District Attorney who oversaw cases in the Rockaways during the PRYSE project. Although I never met him in person, he worked closely with the other DA staff involved in PRYSE as they would make him aware of any cases that occurred in Rockaway. Fred worked with law enforcement much more closely than the community assistants, and would eventually concentrate on all non-fatal gun crimes on the peninsula as well as gang-related criminal activity.

BRIDGET S. was an Executive Assistant District Attorney with whom I worked closely on the reporting required by the feds for PRYSE as she oversaw all the outreach and program development for the office, among other administrative tasks. Bridget, a white woman in her 50s, never attended any PRYSE functions but was always present for evaluation interviews at the QDA office.

New York City Police Department (NYPD)

Police Officer LAURA JANE B. served as the police department's coordinator of grants. The officer, a white woman in her 40s who did not live on the peninsula, was very active in PRYSE as the person responsible for overseeing the involvement in the initiative of various youth officers (and their captains) from the 100th and 101st precincts.

Early on, **Youth Officer DONALD M.** was the police officer most involved in PRYSE; he attended many meetings. Working at the 101st Precinct, he was highly involved with the law enforcement explorers. Donald, a white man in his late 30s, transferred to a higher administrative position at One Police Plaza.

DONALD M. worked closely with Youth Officer **DAVID L.**, an African American officer in his 30s who would eventually become the 101st Precinct's Community Affairs Officer. David took over the work with the law enforcement explorers when Donald transferred to the administrative position.

Youth Sergeant **MARK O.**, who participated regularly in PRYSE membership activities, such as Steering Committee meetings, but slightly less frequently than the officers mentioned above, was a white officer in his 30s from the 100th Precinct. (The proximity of the 101st precinct to most PRYSE-related meetings was likely a contributing factor to its greater representation.)

Baruch College/School of Public Affairs - Local Evaluation Team

Michelle Ronda, a Puerto Rican woman, was in her late 20s and early 30s during the time when she worked with the faculty at Baruch College, enrolled in a PhD program in Sociology, and engaged in research assistantship activities from 1999 until 2005.

Gregg Van Ryzin was a white man in his late 30s and an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs when he worked closely on the PRYSE project from 1999 until about 2003.

Lynne Weikart, a white woman in her 50s, and also an Associate Professor in Public Affairs, signed onto the PRYSE project in 1999 and worked closely on it until about 2003. She was still involved from 2003 to 2005 but mostly in an advisory position.

Weed & Seed, Queens Borough Public Library

Although Far Rockaway Weed & Seed was a separate initiative from PRYSE, there was significant overlap among the personnel, perhaps because the community is small and professionals in the relevant fields are scarce. At the time PRYSE got started, P.O. Laura Jane B. (the NYPD's liaison to PRYSE, above) was acting as the director of Weed & Seed.

PAUL D. succeeded Laura Jane B. as the director of Weed & Seed. His primary function was as the director of security at the Queens Borough Public Library. He became involved in PRYSE as co-chair of its Education Committee.

Rockaway residents/politicians

SANDRA S., an African American woman in her early 30s, was very involved from the beginning of PRYSE, participating in the Steering as well as the School Safety Committee, until late in 2002 when what were described to me as "personal problems" led her to withdraw from PRYSE and other community activities. When Sandra began volunteering with PRYSE, she had been serving as a Parent Advocate in one of the local public schools and was also a Title 1 representative on the Parent Teacher

Association at that school. She was a neighborhood resident living in public housing.

JACK P. was a human rights specialist working for city government, a neighborhood resident and a long-time local activist. In 2002, under his leadership, the first annual Multicultural family festival was held on the peninsula, and the event was repeated twice before PRYSE funding ended. An African American man in his 50s, Jack was Co-Chair of the PRYSE Community Development Committee; he was also a member of his local Community Board.

HELEN J. was very involved with PRYSE initially as the first chair of the Education Committee, but dropped out after the first few months. She was a white woman in her 30s who lived in Rockaway Park, the neighborhood bordering Belle Harbor. She was running for City Council and during that time was Co-Chairing the Educational and School Initiatives Committee, one of the PRYSE sub-committees.

EMMA F. was also running for public office (City Council) when she began participating with PRYSE. She was a minister, as well as a pastor of a church in Arverne, and had been a principal of a Queens public high school. She organized several Town Hall meetings after the tragic death of Thomas Kareem Johnson in 2001. She was involved with PRYSE until early in 2002 (she lost her bid for a City Council seat in November 2002).

ALISSA D. was a non-profit director, local resident and eventual partner in the Healthy Communities Access Project (HCAP) that grew out of the PRYSE coalition. An African American woman in her 40s, she got involved in 2002 and came to chair the marketing committee, but by 2003 she had said she was overextended and could no longer lead the committee. She had co-founded her educationally-focused non-profit in 2001 to serve local children and their parents.

Outside consultants

ERIC H., a professional leadership consultant, was hired to conduct a series of training seminars for PRYSE personnel in June 2001. He was an African American man in his 50s and was referred to Brenda by the Safe Schools/Healthy Students communications team. He lived in North Carolina.

APPENDIX C

Notes On Methodology: The Case Study Approach

It is correct that summarizing case studies is often difficult, especially as concerns case process. It is less correct as regards case outcomes. The problems in summarizing case studies, however, are due more often to the properties of the reality studied than to the case study as a research method. Often it is not desirable to summarize and generalize case studies. Good studies should be read as narratives in their entirety. (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 241).

This dissertation reflects my work as an evaluation researcher hired by the PRYSE initiative, as an academic researcher studying PRYSE itself, and as a full-fledged participant, with all of the benefits and limitations inherent in these overlapping, sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicted roles. The research was gathered via a mixed methods approach, in part due to the demands of my specific program evaluation role, but also thanks to the wide variety of rich social science research methods to which I was exposed during my post-graduate training.

I was hired as a member of the PRYSE Evaluation Team after its SS/HS proposal was accepted in 1999. At the time I was a graduate student research assistant with faculty at the Baruch College School of Public Affairs; two Baruch faculty members became the co-principal investigators. In the course of this work I soon became fascinated with the Rockaways and with the remarkable dynamics I saw emerge at PRYSE, as a diverse group started working together to promote what they intended to be a tangible change in the community.

At first I was engaged primarily in data and record management and support but by the end of first year became a full partner in the evaluation process, including working

on the development of the local program theory and the outcome measures intended to articulate the program goals and the means for achieving them. We evaluators from the start planned to rely on quantitative and qualitative methods, including interviews of key stakeholders; surveys of students, teachers and community residents; and, ultimately, participant observation. While the latter was not initially intended, it became clear within a few weeks that too much distance would render the Coalition's work incomprehensible to us, given the scope of programs offered under its umbrella.

The original evaluation proposal foresaw that the Evaluation Team would conduct site visits and surveys of students and teachers at some of the PRYSE "target schools," in addition to "other relevant program sites" (PRYSE, 1999, p. 28). Although we visited the latter (meaning, at a minimum, that we visited the offices of all funded partners), we never made site visits of schools. (I visited several schools either for meetings or to request permission to engage in research.) We also did not complete in-school surveys of students or teachers, as the relevant proposals were vetoed by principals (see Chapter 5, section "Studied to Death"). As a result, we opted to conduct focus groups with youth enrolled in one the target schools, who were contacted via an outside organizer (see Chapter 7).

Throughout most of the initiative I was responsible for attending Steering Committee meetings, which I did with few exceptions, and I also attended nearly all of the meetings of the Community and School Safety committee. By the end of PRYSE, in 2004, I was the lead evaluator. My participation (which had followed on my applied research work on a needs assessment for the HOPE VI housing revitalization project) led by the third year to further employment in other evaluation projects in the same

neighborhood (with HCAP/Rockaway Health Alliance and Weed & Seed) as well as an initiative in Staten Island.

The data employed herein dates from the beginning of my time on the PRYSE project and was initially gathered through the tasks of evaluation. For example, many of my early interviews with key players in the initiative were focused exclusively on funded partners, their goals and anticipated outcomes. This work was daunting as several of the organizations involved did not have experience with the logic of program evaluation, and so we saw a large learning curve as well as some resistance to the process. Within the first year of the project (working as many as 35 hours per week during federal grant reporting periods), I became preoccupied with the way that we as evaluators understood our work as embedded in a well-defined model (the CCI) that other participants were not usually conscious of implementing.

Because the leadership of PRYSE and the Evaluation Team were responsible for communication with the federal grant officers, and would in the end be the small group that interacted with the federal government in phone communications (in the case of the project manager), in reports (in the case of the manager, her staff and the Evaluation Team), and through attendance of required SS/HS conferences, we built relationships with the people at the federal level by necessity as well as design.*

This dissertation relies on an ethnographic analytic process. Ethnographic case study is both a product and a process. My immersion in the field included a variety of investigation methods: participant observation in many different settings; access to data gathered via our three-year community survey; a series of focus groups with local teens

* Eventually, the project manager invited the reverend from the Ministers Coalition to also come to a national conference, but usually only the project manager, her assistant and members of the Evaluation Team attended the national SS/HS conferences.

attending schools in the area in which I was working and researching; and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders from funded programs. As my intellectual interest in PRYSE grew, I obtained approval from the Baruch College Institutional Review Board to interview PRYSE Coalition members with an eventual dissertation specified as the purpose; approval was originally granted in May 2004 and extended through May 2006.

In the course of this work I also spent three months as a volunteer at the Far Rockaway branch of the Queens Borough Public Library, re-shelving books and helping young people with homework assignments and paper topics; I assisted in the compilation of archival data from 1990-2003 on education, health and crime data for the peninsula; and I regularly attended quarterly trainings for “Communities That Care,” a trademarked strategy aimed at community development to reduce youth violence and substance abuse, which was influential within SS/HS and which is treated at several points in the present work starting in Chapter 1.

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Moderator's Guide

For a series of focus groups with youth who were students at a local high school and invited to a diner near the school, where they were treated to a meal of their choice.

GUIDE:

Welcome the group. Thank them for participating. Explain the PRYSE Coalition, the grant and that we want their input to better understand whether the current youth-focused programs are addressing youth concerns. Explain about the stipend (\$25 for participation).

Explain how a focus group works. Explain need for all participants to discuss each question openly with Moderator and each other. Explain about confidentiality. Check that all have submitted parental permission and have them sign assent statements.

1. In your own view, what are the most important safety and health issues facing Rockaway children and teens?
2. In your own view, what services and programs are needed for children and teens in the Rockaways (and which of these is the most important)?
3. How safe do you personally feel traveling to and from school each day?
4. What makes a safe school?
5. How much of a problem is fighting or bullying, smoking, drinking or using drugs, gangs at your school in your view?
6. What do you like about the Rockaways?
7. Are there any ways you would like to see the Rockaways change?

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