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# **Student drug testing and the surveillance school economy: An analysis of media representation and policy transfer in Australian schools**

Anxieties relating to the health, safety and security of schoolchildren have been met with a variety of surveillance apparatus in schools internationally. Drawing on findings from a content analysis of newspaper reports relating to drug testing in Australian schools, this article seeks to excavate the ways in which the media shapes, informs, reflects and instructs narratives pertaining to the use and acceptability of surveillance. Finding that a 'greater good' discourse prevails in debates about drug testing in schools, contrary to evidence purporting its ineffectiveness, it is argued that the phenomenon can be explained by the rapidly emerging surveillance school economy whereby education is increasingly exposed to neoliberal corporate priorities and governmental imperatives. Further, finding that policy transfer goes some way to explaining the suggested introduction of random drug testing programs in Australian schools, the article provides critical analysis to understand how surveillance practices come to be activated, understood and negotiated as they cross national boundaries.

**Keywords:** drug testing; surveillance; policy transfer; neoliberalisation; media; schools

## **1. Introduction**

Schoolchildren are subject to multiple registers and techniques of surveillance capturing visual, cognitive, spatial, biological and behavioural datum via a complex assemblage of surveillance mechanisms; organisational, structural and technological. The intensity of school surveillance continues to gather momentum as new narratives emerge to transport their supposed necessity into the education sphere. Proprietors of techno-solutions, leveraging on the responsibilisation of schools, search for problems to address and find that the modern school offers appealing terrain on which to cargo concerns about a broad range of societal issues, including drug and alcohol use amongst young people. Elsewhere the prevalence, use and objectives of the manifold surveillance technologies now routinely used in education have been detailed (Author/s, 2010a, 2012, 2016, 2017a), exploring how practices converge and coalesce to form the Surveillance School.

Late modern anxieties relating to the health of young people have come to the fore in recent years, and a range of surveillance practices have been introduced to schools with the *prima facie* objective of improving student well-being. Examples include biometric finger scans in school canteens underscoring healthy eating initiatives (Author/s, 2010b; Leaton-Gray,

*forthcoming*), GPS tracking supporting cycle to school programs (Author/s, 2017a), radio frequency identification (RFID) to measure attendance (Author/s, 2017b), as well as wearable techs and mobile apps categorised as ‘mHealth’ (Rich, 2017). mHealth has been defined as ‘medical and public health practice supported by mobile devices, such as mobile phones, patient monitoring devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and other wireless devices’ (WHO, 2011: 6). This development has resulted in a multitude of health apps embedded with latent surveillance attributes, often masked through gamification being used in schools (Gard and Lupton, 2017; Rich, 2017). For example, Fitnessgram, ‘the first “student fitness report card”’, tracks the physical activity data of more than 10 million students around the world (The Cooper Institute, 2014: n.p.). Such apps are just a small part of a broader focus on children’s health augmented with, and facilitated by, surveillance equipment. This article focuses explicitly on the introduction of, or suggested implementation of, randomised student drug testing (RSDT) or drug and alcohol testing (DAT) in schools, and attempts to understand, through a content analysis of the media coverage in Australia, the socio-culturally mediated responses to this phenomenon.

In approaching the ‘the newspaper as cultural product’ (Anderson, 1991: 33) the article seeks to excavate the ways in which the media shapes, informs, reflects and instructs narratives pertaining to the use and acceptability of surveillance and reveal the symbiotic process whereby the media discourse is both molded by prevailing societal values and, in turn, provides different narratives and multiple frames through which surveillance practices in education can be viewed and understood. As Hall (1980: 129) has outlined, the audience is not only the ‘receiver’ of media messages but also ‘the source’, and media texts must be viewed as part of ‘the wider socio-cultural and political structure of which they are a differentiated part’.

Organised into four key parts, this article places content analysis of newspaper stories reporting on school-based drug testing into a broader nexus with the burgeoning ‘surveillance school economy’ (Author, 2013). First, drawing upon the available literature, a brief overview of drug testing in schools is provided. Recent debates have been dominated by the U.S. and these are outlined, before turning to look at developments in Australia more specifically. This is followed by details of the methodology utilised to analyse the media representation of school drug testing. The third section turns to the findings. Analysis of 34 unique newspaper stories relating to school based drug-testing programs reveals the major

narratives framing the depiction of drug testing in Australian schools. It explores a number of, sometimes competing, concerns including the effectiveness of drug testing and the impact on student civil liberties, particularly in relation to privacy. The final section considers the findings in relation to global policy transfer and the surveillance school economy.

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it offers insight into the extant and emergent use of drug testing in Australian schools which has not received much academic attention hitherto; second, it outlines the media discourse around drug testing schoolchildren, and; third, it excavates the cultural setting of one country, highlighting the ways in which surveillance practices come to be activated, understood and negotiated. The emergence of school RSDT programs, and the rise of the ‘surveillance school’ more broadly, are located within the global move towards the neoliberalising of school policy (Ball, 2012).

Neoliberalism here is characterised by the retraction of non-market social entitlement, deregulation of the economy, and the privatising of state functions, institutions and public space. The article expounds a process whereby, as part of the neoliberal project, schools are becoming responsibilised for a range of social issues, which exposes them to the lucrative school surveillance economy. Further, finding that policy transfer goes some way to explaining the suggested introduction of RSDT programs in Australian schools, the article provides critical analysis to understand ‘the ways in which local political cultures and the activities of key political actors serve to initiate, reshape, mediate or resist policy ideas and innovations that transcend national boundaries’ (Jones and Newburn, 2006: 782). More broadly, the article provides an alternative reading to globalised depictions of surveillance by revealing the cultural specificity through which surveillance regimes materialise once filtered through local context.

## **2. Background: Drug testing in schools**

Drugs can be detected in samples of blood, hair, sweat, breath, and common for school-based initiatives, saliva and urine (Levy et al, 2006). As a result, biological means of determining substance use have gathered traction in a number of public and private sectors, including education. Touted as an effective means to prevent, identify, and respond to substance use amongst young people (Coombs and Ryan, 1990; Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), 2002), school-based drug screening programs have become increasingly common in recent years, particularly in the U.S. The School Health Policies and Practices Study

(SHPPS), a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), found that in 2014 more than a quarter (26.6%) of U.S. high schools conducted some form of student drug testing. Of that figure, 45.9% of schools conducted drug tests randomly among members of specific groups, such as athletes and students who participate in other extracurricular activities. However, through a process of ‘surveillance creep’, whereby surveillance practices ‘justified for one purpose find new applications not originally part of their mandate’ (Ericson and Haggerty, 2006:18), it is not surprising that drug testing initially required for those taking part in extracurricular activities, and particularly sports, as part of anti-doping objectives, was soon followed by recommendations to test all students as a matter of course (ONDCP, 2002). A study by DuPont et al (2013) revealed that 29.5% of high schools with a RSDT program conducted random drug tests with a sample drawn from the entire school population.

The prevalence of drug testing programs outside the U.S. is unknown, however, and much of the information stems from minor reports and news articles (DuPont et al, 2013). Across Europe, a small-scale study of suspicion-based drug testing conducted in 2004 by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction reported drug testing programs in schools in Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, and the U.K., as well as more formal drug testing programs in the Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, and Sweden (DuPont et al, 2013). Research on RSDT in schools remains limited. DuPont et al (2013: 839) attribute ‘the paucity of empirical studies’ in part to ‘substantial opposition to such programs’. Critics have voiced opposition based on a range of concerns including the expense of tests, violation of student privacy, and the potential negative impact on school climate (DuPont et al, 2013). The limited empirical research that has been conducted can largely be categorised into studies that measure whether RDST is an effective means of preventing, identifying, and responding to substance use amongst young people (Goldberg et al, 2007; McKinney, 2004; Yamaguchi, Johnston and O’Malley, 2003) and studies that have attempted to examine the views and perceptions of a range of stakeholders including parents (Schwartz et al, 2003), physicians (Levy et al, 2006) and young people themselves (Fletcher, Bonell and Sorhaindo, 2010). Yamaguchi, Johnston and O’Malley (2003) analysed the data of 76,000 students in eighth, 10th, and 12th grades in American secondary schools, between the years 1998 and 2001. They found that the majority of students reported that their use of drugs was not impacted by school drug testing initiatives. Furthermore, in relation to male athletes specifically, they did

not find that school based drug testing resulted in lower levels of marijuana or other illicit substance use.

Goldberg et al (2007) conducted a randomized controlled study of a single cohort of high school athletes in the US. Schools were randomly assigned to implement a testing policy or the control condition (deferred testing). Five intervention schools and six deferred DAT control schools completed the 2-year study. Goldberg et al (2007) periodically assessed the impact of the program by means of voluntary and confidential questionnaires. They found that 'student-athletes from intervention and control schools did not differ in past 1-month use of illicit drug or a combination of drug and alcohol use at any of the four follow-up periods' (2007: 421). Furthermore, and somewhat paradoxically, they reported that athletes in the intervention cohort believed less in the benefits of testing and less that testing was a reason not to use drugs than the control group, potentially due to the ease of circumventing tests. Goldberg et al concluded that 'more research is needed before DAT is considered an effective deterrent for school-based athletes' (2007: 421).

Views remain mixed regarding drug testing young people as a means of preventing nonmedical and illicit substance use. Schwartz et al (2003) claim there is some parental support for testing children at home and at school. In contrast, a study of physicians reported that 'most disagree with school drug testing programs' (Levy et al, 2006: 336). There have been no studies to date, that the author/s are aware of, that have examined the discourses represented in news reporting on school-based drug testing programs. As an important site of socio-cultural transmission the newspaper as cultural product can offer useful insights into how and why drug testing is accepted in some instances and problematised in others.

## **2.1 Drug testing in Australian schools**

On account of its 'punitive and inquisitorial' nature, the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) recommended *against* drug testing in Australian schools (Roche et al, 2008: ix). In a published review of 'all relevant issues involved in drug detection and screening in the school setting', the commissioned report highlighted numerous practical, financial, ethical and legal reasons, and warned against drug testing impacting negatively on young people, particularly high-risk and vulnerable groups of children. The report concluded that 'overall, the body of evidence examined indicates a strong case to be made against drug detection and screening strategies being utilised in the school setting' (Roche et al., 2008: ix).

In concord with the ANCD, a number of state government departments have recommended against randomised school-based drug testing initiatives in Australia. For example, the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training released a report in 2010 in which it asserts ‘Students must not be drug tested at school or during school activities such as school socials, excursions and sporting events’ (2010: 21). The report stated that drug testing is ‘contrary to some of the key aims of government school education including establishing and maintaining the trust of students’, but also in light of issues pertaining to ‘cost, accuracy and sensitivity, relevance, privacy and due process rights of students’ it should not be implemented (2010: 21). Similarly, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ‘does not support any form of drug testing in schools for students or teachers’ due to ‘legal, technical, ethical and financial issues’ (2009: 12). However, despite this national and state-based sentiment, as well as the corpus of international evidence attesting that school-based testing is not an effective or appropriate way to address illicit substance use amongst young people, numerous schools in Australia have implemented this approach. Although exact figures are unknown, there have been sporadic reports of drug testing being implemented in Australian schools. For example, there have been reports that schools in Victoria (Houston, 2012; Tomazin, 2013) and Queensland (Lewis, 2012; Sweetman, 2012) have trialled or implemented RSDT, and organisations such as The Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) have also targeted student athletes to test for anabolic steroids and performance enhancing drugs in NSW (Braithwaite, 2007). In addition the police have also initiated sniffer dog searches of schoolchildren (Byron Shire News, 2014). In light of the disparity between research findings relating to the effectiveness of school drug testing and the continuation in its use, some possible reasons are offered in the latter part of this article to explain why RSDT continues despite an evidence base suggesting that it is ineffective, and at times, detrimental to the well being of young people. It is argued that two key interrelated processes, underscored by the neoliberalising of education policy, provide explanatory value – a process of policy transfer and the emergence of the surveillance school economy.

### **3. Methodology**

Content analysis has a rich history in the social sciences and has been used widely as a research technique. Titsscher et al (2000: 55) have identified it as ‘the longest established method of text analysis among the set of empirical methods of social investigation’. In its



broadest sense, it has been defined as ‘the study of recorded human communications’ (Babbie, 2001: 304) and has gained prominence with the expansion of mass communication. Content analysis is ‘essentially a coding operation’ (2001: 309) that enables the researcher to categorise raw data and analyse in a broader context. The method adopted for the present study was a classical content analysis, using a largely quantitative approach to ascertain the occurrence, frequency and meaning of key words and themes. Newspaper articles relating to surveillance technologies in Australian schools published during the past five years (between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015 inclusive) were accessed using the online database Factiva, a news database of international, national and regional newspapers from over 200 countries. The key search strings in Table. 1 were input to identify and extract the news stories.

**[Table 1 ‘Search strings’, *about here*]**

After narrowing down to the relevant articles by excluding those less than 100 words in length, those printed in non-mainstream outlets (such as industry websites), those not relating to surveillance in schools, and removing duplicates (most newspapers are syndicated across several states and so duplicates were plentiful), 265 relevant articles remained, the majority of which, 176 (66%) focused on CCTV in schools, but the second most common surveillance application was drug testing featuring in 34 (13%) unique stories (Table. 2).

**[Table 2. ‘Surveillance technology featured in story’, *about here*]**

A coding instrument was developed to capture key features of each story. This included the specific surveillance technology being discussed (e.g. CCTV, drug testing, RFID etc.), the nature of the story (e.g. reporting on a crime, health issue), key concepts (e.g. privacy, civil liberties), the explicit objective of the technology (e.g. improving attendance, crime control, health etc.), which stakeholders were consulted as part of the story and how the story was framed. The author and three research assistants<sup>1</sup> coded each of the news articles, discussing any anomalies as they arose, and refining the coding instrument as required. Establishing

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<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements to be added following anonymous peer review.

inter-rater reliability is essential in order to establish the validity of a coding scheme (see Cohen, 1960, for a discussion on how to establish agreement). The analysis provided insight into the salient features of news reporting on surveillance in schools, and thereby enabled inferences to be drawn regarding the readership's decoding of stories. Hier et al. (2007: 733) have highlighted how the media shapes public opinion about surveillance, in their case CCTV, by constructing and presenting the 'symbols, myths and images that embody and represent social problems' in tandem with moralizing discourses that serve to legitimate surveillance (Hier et al, 2007: 733). The findings presented in this paper focus on the media representation of drug testing in Australian schools in order to begin to unveil some of the dominant discourses on this phenomenon.

#### **4. Findings**

Overall, the use of drug testing in schools was a contested issue, and similar to CCTV and other surveillance practices (see Author/s, 2016), somewhat polarized opinion. It was the focus of 34 unique newspaper articles over the 5-year period, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015, noting that many of these stories were syndicated and thus appeared in multiple local and regional outlets. This translates to approximately one story every two months, but in actuality, the stories were clustered around specific events, such as a school introducing a DAT program, typical of news cycles. Of the 24 stories, overall, 8 of these stories were coded as being overtly positive about school drug-screening programs, 11 were coded as being negative, 11 stories were 'balanced' in that they presented both positive viewpoints as well as concerns or issues relating to the practice, and a further four stories were coded as being 'neutral'. In other words, they simply reported on the practice being introduced or used but with no inference towards a particular standpoint.

Major narratives framing the proposed introduction or current use of drug testing in schools extracted from the analysis were divided into, sometimes competing, concerns relating to the effectiveness of drug testing and the impact on student civil liberties, particularly in relation to privacy. There was certainly ambiguity regarding the overall purpose of DAT in schools and whether this was driven by objectives relating to care or control of young people. Lyon (2003) suggests that the underlying reasons for surveillance can be situated along a 'continuum from care to control', arguing that 'some element of care and some element of control are nearly always present'. Similarly, Nelson and Garey (2009: 8) view the motivations of care and control 'in a dialectical relationship with each other, and not a simple

dichotomous one'. The following analysis examines these themes to explicate how the socio-cultural context in Australia potentially shapes how, and why, some surveillance technologies are uncritically accepted and others are problematized. It is argued that the pervasive narrative that is reached and perpetuated by the print media in Australia is one of appealing to the 'greater good' reasoning – that is, that a loss of some freedom and liberty is worth the trade for an increase in well-being, health and safety. This overly simplistic standpoint, an all too familiar leitmotif to surveillance scholars around the world, fails to recognise or acknowledge a broader nexus of socio-economic and political trends in which school surveillance occurs, or appreciate its ability to profoundly alter the school climate.

#### **4.1 Drug testing and the discourse of the 'greater good'**

Thematically, the news coverage on the issue of drug testing in Australian schools centers on interlinked themes of effectiveness and the impact on schoolchildren's civil liberties; 12 stories raised some discussion about the effectiveness of school drug testing in preventing and/or detecting substance use amongst students, and 11 stories explicitly referred to the civil liberties of students - 5 specifically mentioning 'privacy' and, one 'trust'. Explicating the entwined nature of these debates, often it was civil liberties stakeholders that would raise issues pertaining to effectiveness and potential adverse effects. For example, the Queensland Council for Civil Liberties president (cited in Lewis, 2012: n.p.) stated:

A study of the results of this testing undertaken by the Australian National Council on Drugs found that the evidence is that it does not work. The evidence from America is that there is no difference in drug taking between schools that have testing and schools that don't. On top of that, the evidence is that children see it as inquisitorial and they react against it and they therefore refuse to participate in other drug education and rehabilitation programs that might be made available.

Similarly, concerns relating to the reliability and accuracy of DAT results were raised by civil liberties campaigners highlighting that 'the tests could be unreliable and inaccurate' (*Gold Coast Bulletin*, 'A question of privacy', 2012).

The analysis revealed a hierarchy of narratives whereby the voices of school managerial authorities were privileged over others; 15 news stories featured school management representatives - all of whom were positive about school-based drug testing. Typically their

position was characterised by a reluctant resignation that drug testing was a necessary evil to ensure the health and well-being of students. In contrast, just five stories represented school students' views and five included statements from civil liberties groups. This suggests that students who are subject to the drug testing itself are denied a platform to contest their subjugation to surveillance practices. As such, in framing the analysis of the 'newspaper as cultural product' (Anderson, 1991: 33) it must be recognised that it favours accounts of some dominant actors whilst marginalising or ignoring other sectors of society.

While some concerns were raised, the overall narrative alluded to the need for civil liberties such as privacy to be flexible in order to accommodate the 'greater good' of health and well-being amongst students. For example, one school principle was cited as saying:

There's obviously going to be some parents who don't want us to do this [drug testing]. But we have to look at what the greater good is here. If we can help steer our kids down a certain path and make them aware of the dangers of drugs and alcohol, we could be saving lives (cited in Houston, 2012: n.p.).

In a similar vein, and highlighting how the boundaries of school responsibility have become blurred, another school principal stated:

The research shows that scare campaigns don't work and we were then pointed in the direction of random drug testing as a possible way to prevent boys experimenting in the first instance...So if the boys know that we can detect it and they know they could get randomly tested, they're telling me that that's a very strong reason for them to say no, which is exactly what we want...If I see you or hear about you doing something on the weekend or the holidays that's putting you at jeopardy or putting [you] at risk and affecting your health, I personally have a moral and ethical motivation to stop that (cited in Lewis, 2012: n.p.)

School-based DAT was viewed as responsabilizing young people to take care of their health and bodies. The explicit rhetoric being, 'public safety and the safety of students who are potentially taking drugs overrides a student's right to privacy' ('Should Students Be Drug Tested?' (*The Satellite*, 2012). This view was not only the preserve of school principals but also appealed to 'commonsense' views held by members of the public. A reader's letter entitled 'Say yes to Tests' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 2010) 'congratulated' a private school in

Sydney for being ‘brave enough to tackle one of the most invasive issues of the day’ despite the fact that parents were informed only after the tests had taken place. The author dismissed the ‘outsiders’ who ‘seemed to think it was unfair and an invasion of civil liberties’, reminiscent of debates regarding the introduction of other surveillance mechanisms in schools, such as CCTV (Author/s, 2013).

In these quotes, appeals to the greater good are explicit and override those of children’s rights. Similar arguments have been put forward in relation to other school surveillance and security measures such as bag searches. As Warnick (2010) suggests ‘having a bag searched for a weapon seems like it causes students little substantive harm... in comparison to the potential harm of being in a school with weapons’. Similarly, an Australian headteacher stated ‘I don’t mind copping the flak if it saves one boy in the next two years’ (cited in Chilcot and Hart, 2012: n.p.). However, this somewhat presumptuous position fails to recognize the unintended consequences of suspicionless searches on student privacy and trust, and presumes that school DAT can indeed prevent or deter illicit drug use amongst young people. In a trade off between safety and privacy, the former will always prevail as the safety of young people is undoubtedly paramount, but this presumes that the trade is real rather than curated or imagined. The ‘if it saves just one child mantra’ (Author, 2013) trumps all other concerns, but often this argument is used to silence opposing voices rather than enact evidence-based, proportionate and rational policies to attend to school-based issues.

## **5. Policy transfer and the surveillance school economy: understanding school-based drug testing in light of the evidence**

Incredibly, but as is so often the case, the introduction of school-based drug screening is not premised on a carefully considered review of the evidence base to ascertain if the negative impacts and consequences are outweighed by successes in preventing and treating substance use amongst adolescents. To explain its implementation then, the analysis of Australian newspapers reveals two interrelated driving forces – a process of policy transfer (both topographical and institutional), and the emergence of the burgeoning school surveillance economy.

### **5.1 Topographical and institutional policy transfer**

Globalisation and the information communication revolution, to which the surveillance age is

irrevocably bound, have facilitated what political scientists have come to refer to as ‘policy transfer’ (Wolman, 1992; Jones and Newburn, 2006) or ‘boundary-crossing practice’ (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 169), a process that involves the importation of ideas from abroad. In ‘settler societies’, such as Australia, defined by Stasiulis, Daiva and Nira Yuval-Davis (1995: 3) as ‘societies in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms’, the overriding of endogenous knowledge with imported ideas and values is well recognised. In these societies there is a long history of school policy and curriculum being based on Eurocentric models (Author/s, *forthcoming*; Lingard, 2009). In many recent analyses, it is argued that policy originates in the U.S and then flows to other countries. As Jones and Newburn (2006: 1) attest, ‘the United States has been either the direct source of, or at least inspiration for, a number of the policy developments in Britain over the past 20 years’. Using the established channels already etched into settler societies, policies and ideas exported from the U.S. are also, arguably, filtering through to inspire educational policy and practice in Australia, including, but not limited to standardised testing (Lingard, 2009) and zero tolerance school discipline (Author/s, *forthcoming*; Sullivan, 2016). Illustrative of this process, in 2012, reports of a private school in Queensland introducing randomized drug testing, a move supported by the Queensland Education Minister, were announced after the principal instigating the program had ‘recently returned from a fact-finding tour of the United States’ (Lewis, 2012). Wacquant (1999) has noted a ‘worldwide diffusion’ of ‘made-in-the-USA’ ideologies and policies that generate appeal and provide a stamp of legitimacy to educational policy regarding discipline and security.

In addition to geographical policy transfer, there is also institutional policy transfer taking place. This relates to the uptake of policies and practices originally associated with, in this case, the criminal justice system, being applied in other sectors, such as the education system. In the context of school surveillance, this process is often oiled by accompanying narratives of risk and fear so that such measures are perceived as necessary and proportionate to safeguard students. Growing out of the police enforcement of drug trafficking in the United States during the mid- to late-1980s, ‘zero tolerance’ has come to describe disciplinary philosophies and policies that are intended to deter disruptive behaviours through the application of severe, predetermined and certain punishment. A transferal of processes and products associated with criminal justice into the education sector, as has previously been

noted in relation to zero tolerance school discipline, CCTV and onsite police officers, for example (Author/s, 2013). In response to another school implementing a DAT program, a college teacher ‘applauded the school's zero tolerance to drug use’ (cited in Davies, 2012). Further exemplifying policy transfer and criminal justice semantics; another school was implementing a ‘two-strike policy’, whereby an initial positive result would initiate counseling with the Headteacher and their parents, whereas a second positive result would result in expulsion. Of further interest is how the drug testing program was targeting ‘party drugs’ used ‘in the holidays and on the weekends’, not in school or during school hours (cited in *Gold Coast Bulletin*, 2012) extending the reach of school disciplinary mechanisms far beyond the campus. However, in examining policy transfer or ‘policy borrowing’ (Lingard, 2009), it is important to recognise how local context mediates their implementation. As argued elsewhere (Author/s, date: page), ‘cultural context and specificity are central to understanding the materiality of surveillance apparatus and regimes’. However, since the present study did not incorporate comparative analysis of the media framing of RDST in schools between different countries, it is not possible to ascertain the degree to which narratives are themselves circulated and internationalised.

## **5.2 The Surveillance School Economy**

Drug testing is not a cheap endeavor. It was estimated back in 2003 that a single standard drug test ‘to detect marijuana, tobacco, cocaine, heroin, opiates, amphetamines, barbiturates, and tranquilizers can range from \$14 to \$30 [USD] per test, while a test for steroid use costs \$100 per test’ (Yamaguchi, Johnston and O’Malley, 2003: 159). The drug testing industry is set to profit massively if drug testing students is mainstreamed in schools.

As outlined elsewhere, the ‘the Surveillance School economy is booming’ (Author/s) and numerous vendors are now seeking to access the lucrative education market. Illustrating this, a survey of the security industry in the US found that the education sector was the third fastest growing market with a 15 per cent annual increase in sales (Fuentes, 2013). In relation to workplace drug testing in the US, it has been argued that workplace policies ‘fueled the development of a huge industry ... comprising drug-test manufacturers, consulting and law firms specializing in the development of drug-testing policies and procedures, and laboratories that carry out the testing’ (Frone cited in Pinsker, 2015; n.p.). There are clear parallels here with the emergence of global networked governance (articulated by Ball and

Juneman, 2012; Rhodes, 1996; amongst others) whereby public private partnerships are activated to offer ‘new’ solutions for ‘the treatment of seemingly intractable problems’ (Ball and Juneman, 2012: 5). It would appear, that alongside workplace drug testing, a similar advance into the education market is underway, first in the US, and then filtering down to other countries. Opportunities are being curated in order to commodify behavioural modification through surveillance apparatus, including drug-testing schoolchildren. For example, one US drug testing company markets its services with the following statement:

Drug testing has proven to be a highly effective deterrent to drug use in schools. It is also a great way to identify individuals who need help. Students subject to drug testing have a built-in reason to say no when offered drugs, even in the face of extreme peer pressure. Some students, by nature of their participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, cheer leading and band, are natural role models to other students, and drug testing helps ensure that they set a proper example. When a school adopts a drug testing program, it sends a clear message: Drug abuse is not tolerated here! (datcs.com: n.p, emphasis in original).

The current push towards drug testing in schools thus forms part of ‘surveillance capitalism’; a ‘new form of information capitalism [that] aims to predict and modify human behavior as a means to produce revenue and market control’ (Zuboff, 2015: 75). The lucrativeness of school safety was not lost on some commentators represented in the Australian media depiction of DAT. There was concern that school drug testing was emerging from a push by commercial enterprises to access the profitable school market. For example, a spokesperson from Drug and Alcohol Research training Australia stated: ‘We have drug testing companies around this country that are making millions, millions of dollars ... and they certainly want to get into schools. Its an untapped market for them’ (cited in Lewis, 2012).

The school surveillance economy is substantial and many companies offer their services under the guise of safeguarding young people. Once some schools adopt strategies to counter the perceived risks, other schools often follow, through fear that they will be regarded as negligent if they do not (Author/s, 2013). As Kern et al (2006) assert in relation to the U.S., ‘the current push to increase drug testing comes from the drug testing industry as well as well-intentioned educators and parents frustrated by the lack of success of drug prevention programs.’ In this context, it becomes clear that the introduction of drug testing in schools is



more a reflection of the new market logics that have become ‘naturalised’ (Tickell and Peck, 2003: 17) as part of a broader neoliberalising of education. This process exposes institutions such as schools to corporate priorities rather than evidenced-based solutions. As Ball (2012: 27) attests, ‘education policy, education reform are no longer simply a battleground of ideas, they are a financial sector, increasingly infused by and driven by the logic of profit’. Through a process of policy transfer within the context of the surveillance school economy, the education sector is being restructured to follow neoliberal corporate priorities and profits.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

An established evidence-base is often irrelevant in political and economic rhetoric, and in this context, the introduction of school-based drug testing appears to have largely been premised on the superficially intuitive argument that the risk of being randomly tested (and potentially caught) results in anticipatory conformity to a drug-free life amongst students. Such prosaic viewpoints, with a coating of anxiety relating to the health and well-being of young people, provides a compelling case for school-based drug and alcohol testing. Through a process of policy transfer from the U.S., and a filtering down of criminal justice policies into education, the surveillance school economy is able to take root. The present study revealed some objections to school-based drug testing programs in Australia, potentially reflecting the culturally-mediated heterogeneity of surveillance processes. But, overall, the narrative attended to the ‘greater good’ - the familiar trope that a loss of some freedom and liberty is worth the trade off for an increase in well-being and safety (even when this is curated or imagined). This prevailing view works to silence resistance and, as was the case with the introduction of public closed circuit television (CCTV), permits the dismissal of those with objections by inferring that they must have something to hide.

While this study has provided some empirical insight into this process, there is certainly more research required. Much attention has been given to policy mobility and the internationalisation of policy regimes in recent years (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996; Peck, 2002; Peck and Theodore, 2010; McCann, 2011), but less prevalent in the literature is an understanding of how policy transfer relates to the media. The literature on global policy networks has largely viewed media coverage as a means of demonstrating and/or measuring policy transfer, rather than a vehicle for it. The present study similarly has taken media coverage as a dependent variable in an attempt to illuminate how policies are filtered through

local context resulting in domestic divergence and variance. However, a limitation of this approach is that, in the absence of comparative media analysis, it is not known whether media framing is in fact part of the policy export, part of the global ‘mediatization of policy’ (Rawolle and Lingard, 2014). We do know that school RSDT is far more prevalent in the US than in Australia, as outlined but above, which could be illustrative of socio-cultural dynamics moderating its use, or it may simply be a temporal factor. As with other surveillance technologies, they often go through a process of being ‘*made* banal’ (Goold, Loader and Thumala, 2013: 979, emphasis in original) and it may be that this process is, as yet, incomplete in Australia. As such, a further avenue for research could include comparative analysis of media framing on specific educational policies to ascertain whether the media are at once both part of the cause and effect. This would provide important insights for both political scientists and geographers concerned with the processes of policy transfer, as well as surveillance scholars interested in the manifestation of surveillance processes.

This study highlighted how, more often than not, the voices of school principals and government representatives were privileged over children and young people themselves. As the surveillance of young people intensifies, it is paramount to provide them with a platform on which they can attest to the impacts and effects of surveillance on their lives. Furthermore, future research needs to examine the experiences of surveillance by the different characteristics and demographics of schools and the children that attend them. For example, Yamaguchi, Johnston and O’Malley (2003) found that socio-economic status (SES) of schools had a significant difference in school drug testing, where high and low socio-economic schools reported more drug testing than the middle-SES schools. This might be illustrative of the different and varied motivations of school drug-testing programs, particularly as they fall along a continuum of care to control. One could hypothesise that high-SES schools in affluent areas drug test within a remit of care, whereas for poorer schools this could be motivated by control. Further, disaggregating the application and experience of surveillance in schools in relation to gender, race and class would, importantly, illuminate differential cultural meanings and implications. This is key to understanding processes of social sorting; ‘the classifying drive of contemporary surveillance’ (Lyon, 2003: 13), which is now exemplified in the education system.

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