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Curating Risk, Selling Safety? Fear of Crime, Responsibilisation and the Surveillance School Economy

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Introduction

Radicalisation. School shooters. Paedophiles. Obesity. Vandalism. Drug abuse. Cyberbullying. These are just some examples of contemporary anxieties that schools have, through a process of responsabilisation, been tasked with addressing in some form in recent years. As a result, schools have undergone rapid growth in securitisation in a bid to placate fears, whether real, imagined or curated. The voracity with which new modes of security and surveillance technologies are beginning to shape the school campus continues to gather momentum as new narratives of risk emerge to freight their supposed necessity into the education sector. Techno-solutions search for problems to address and find the school a fertile ground on which to sow concerns about a broad range of societal issues and, sometimes imagined, threats, from terrorism to drug use, abduction to bullying. The neophilic approach to technological surveillance in schools has resulted in it becoming a particularly lucrative market for vendors with safety to sell.

Mapping the ascension of three distinct phenomenon in schools: ‘anti-radicalisation’ online toolkits and software; closed circuit television (CCTV) and randomised suspicionless drug testing (whilst recognising that there are countless others), this chapter traces the emergence of these seemingly dissimilar phenomenon to reveal that the driving forces and processes that underpin them are remarkably similar. Multifarious motivations exist for the vast array of ostensibly idiosyncratic mechanisms of security, but the manipulation of fears and anxieties by private entities as part of the neoliberal project is a recurrent theme. Challenging the most prosaic of explanations - a desire to enhance the safety and wellbeing of schoolchildren – the narratives of fear that circulate modern schools, and schoolchildren, are examined. The central thesis of this chapter is that the neoliberal project underscores a trilogy of distinct but interrelated processes that are driving school (hyper)securitisation; (i) responsabilisation and the shifting functions of schooling in postindustrial society; (ii) the cultivation of fear and construction of schools as sites of danger and risk; and, (iii) the flourishing surveillance school economy.

The chapter is broadly organised into three sections. First, it provides a brief background to the anatomy of Surveillance School, before moving on to examine the modern day fears and anxieties that circulate it. Drawing on three examples of school surveillance to illustrate the arguments presented (anti-radicalisation online monitoring, CCTV and school based drug testing) the section examines some of the similar themes that link these distinct phenomena. The final section explores the emergent school surveillance economy. It is argued that manufacturers and suppliers of surveillance and security equipment leverage from the responsabilisation of schools in order to cultivate anxieties and risks, thus ensuring a lucrative

market for their products. Behaviour in school is increasingly viewed through a criminal lens that requires monitoring and discipline to be outsourced to external ‘expert’ providers who, through the neoliberal philosophy of managerialism, are argued to provide a more efficient, effective and specialised service.

The Surveillance School

Despite the widespread assertion that we are now living in a surveillance society, there is actually very little awareness of the existence, intensity and impacts of diverse mechanisms of surveillance that schoolchildren are subject to. Elsewhere I, and others, have detailed accounts of the prevalence, use and objectives of multifarious security and surveillance technologies in schools, but here, they are condensed into a brief overview in order to focus on the driving forces that underpin them (for more detailed accounts of the diverse materiality of surveillance in schools see Gard and Lupton, 2017; Hope, *forthcoming*; Leaton-Gray, *forthcoming*; Monahan and Torres, 2010; Taylor, 2010a; 2010b; 2012; 2017; Williamson, 2017). Overt and covert technologies including visual, biometric, spatial, and algorithmic make up the assemblage of surveillance practices currently used in schools. CCTV and webcams, iris scanning, palm vein readers and Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) are finding their way on to campus. Many schools have introduced airport-style security arches and hand-held metal detector wands to search young people and visitors as they enter the school gates. Some schools, particularly in the US, have introduced suspicionless randomised drug and alcohol testing (DAT) or use police sniffer dogs to search students and their possessions. Underscored by zero-tolerance policies filtered down from criminal justice, some argue that, in tandem, these approaches to discipline are swelling suspension and expulsion rates and producing hyper-securitised education spaces. In the most extreme scenarios, such practices serve to forge a school-to-prison pipeline for the most marginalised and excluded (Devine, 1996; Nolan and Anyon, 2004). However, whilst generalised depictions are prevalent in the literature, it is important to recognise the geographical and cultural heterogeneity of school security, as sociocultural dynamics interplay with specific events in some countries, influencing the acceptability and rejection of security apparatus in the education context (see Taylor, 2016 for discussion of the sociocultural heterogeneity of *Surveillance Schools*).

Fear of crime and the construction of dangerous schools

Anxieties about schools as sites of danger and risk have generated what Furedi describes as a ‘culture of fear’, underpinned by broader anxieties of crime embedded in contemporary social and political structures (Simon, 2007). Such fears, perpetuated by the media, quickly become politicised and schools, in their capacity as *loco parentis*, are tasked with formulating adequate responses to safeguard schoolchildren and the society within which they are situated. As schools have increasingly become responsibilised to respond to a broad range of societal ills and concerns, including terrorism, drug abuse, obesity and violence, they have introduced evermore-invasive technologies and practices so as to be seen to be doing *something*. Against a backdrop of devolved state power (Hope, 2015), neoliberal schools have become entrusted, sometimes even legislated, with the responsibility to counter the varied problems that beset contemporary society. Ill equipped to respond unaided to the numerous requirements and demands, the private sector is on hand to provide a range of sophisticated and high-tech ‘solutions’ even when there is very little evidence to suggest they can fulfil the objectives they claim to be able to address. Monahan has provided a very telling example of how high profile events are transformed into a narrative that demands greater

security over other measures. In relation to the high school shooting at Columbine in 1999, he notes that despite CCTV being present on campus but unable to dissuade or prevent the tragedy; ‘the terrifying shooting has become a key reference point in justifying increased surveillance and security systems in schools throughout the United States’ (2006: 109). Similarly, following the shootings at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012, some US states began implementing laws to enable teachers and school staff to carry guns with programs such as the Armed Teacher Training Program. Policy discussions following such tragic events often focus on implementing more security (CCTV, metal detectors, onsite police officers, and so on) rather than seeking opportunities to implement responsive and restorative practices (Kupchik et al., 2016). Similarly, Muzzati (2004: 143) has warned that this results in missed opportunities to discuss the ‘culture of fear and violence, alienation, hyper-masculinity, frustration, marginalisation’ and a host of other salient factors. Such reactive approaches fail to acknowledge or address the underlying causes of school violence, or recognise that, at times, exclusionary and divisive measures may further isolate or marginalise the very people that are at risk. Similar concerns have been voiced in relation school-based anti-radicalisation monitoring and randomised drug and alcohol testing, as will be outlined below.

The rhetoric of dangerous and risky schools not only drives a process in which fear and risk are drawn upon to rationalise and justify surveillance, but assists in extending the reach of penal state apparatus and private business into schools. Media narratives fuel anxieties and fears. Athleide and Michalowski (1999) note that although the exact focus changes over time, the media creates a ‘discourse of fear’, purveying a language that in itself is saturated with a vocabulary of risk and danger. They highlight in their analysis that children in particular are increasingly the focus of such narratives and this can go some way towards explaining the emergence of metal detectors, CCTV, sniffer dogs and RFID in schools. Importantly, and as articulated by Smith (1986: 128, italics in original), ‘this is not to say that the press *determines* public opinion but rather to argue that it “sets the agenda” which frames such opinion’. In other words, the media generates and reflects issues for the public to be concerned about. Such discourses of risk and fear of crime are compelling. As Athleide and Michalowski (1999: 475) have argued ‘when fear is the prevailing framework for looking at social issues, then other competing frames and discourses lose out’. As such, a “what if..?” (Furedi) mentality paves the way for hyper-securitisation, and a “if it saves just one child mantra” trumps any reasoned or rational debate about the best way to safeguard or protect schoolchildren and teachers (Taylor, 2013).

Curating risky classrooms: An analysis of three case studies

Hypersensitivity to school violence is just one of the avenues by which corporations can implant themselves into the lucrative school market, often bringing with them measures that are outwardly designed to protect young people but that can actually stifle and stultify their growth and development. Three seemingly distinct and unique approaches to manage contemporary fears about schoolchildren and schools are outlined here as a means of tracing the ways in which similar rhetoric underpins their emergence. The three examples are anti-radicalisation online monitoring software, CCTV, and the use of suspicionless drug and alcohol testing in schools underscored by zero tolerance approaches to school discipline. The analysis emphasises how understanding the symbiotic relationship between fear of crime and the surveillance school economy can assist with documenting the emergence of otherwise seemingly nuanced and idiosyncratic phenomena.

(i) Anti-radicalisation monitoring in schools

Schools have been tasked, legally in some countries, to respond to complex social issues such as terrorism, driving an agenda of securitisation and surveillance in education. In the United Kingdom, The Education Act 2002 placed a duty on local education authorities, maintained schools and further education institutions to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Following on from this, under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, ‘The Prevent duty’¹ was introduced which mandates that specified authorities (including schools) must, ‘in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’. In a clear example of responsabilisation, in England, it was outlined in a report by the Department for Education (DfE) that:

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of the schools’ and childcare providers’ wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms ... Schools and childcare providers can also build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views. (DfE, 2015: 5)

The Prevent duty has manifest in a number of different approaches, including assessing the risk of children being drawn into terrorism, teacher training, such as the Home Office devised Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP), and IT policies that include filtering and monitoring of online activity. School staff and childcare providers are obliged to refer any vulnerable or ‘at risk’ students to the Channel programme, a multi-agency programme that focuses on identifying signs of radicalisation and those susceptible to terrorist ideologies and activities, and providing early intervention. Ahead of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 being enacted on 1 July 2015, companies such as such as *Impero*, *Future Digital* and *Securus* began to produce ‘anti-radicalisation software’ aimed at monitoring student online activity and flag extremist-related language. The software included glossaries of key trigger words and phrases such as ‘YODO’ (you only die once), ‘jihadi bride’ and ‘jihobbyist’ alongside functions including the ability to store screenshots of any online activity that is of interest or concern. Initially some of these companies, such as *Impero*, provided the software gratis in a series of pilots in England and the US. This has become a proven marketing strategy in relation to school security and surveillance marketing, as previously outlined in relation to biometric scanners:

Manufacturers and suppliers can be seen to kick-start the surveillance arms race by donating equipment to run pilot programmes. There are many examples of seemingly benevolent gestures by vendors to assist the school in ensuring the safety of pupils and staff. Such loss leaders can serve to open up new markets for surveillance-security products and induce demand amongst schools (Taylor, 2013).

¹ In the United Kingdom, *The Prevent strategy* forms part of the counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST which has the central aim to ‘to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism’. CONTEST utilises a range of techniques and approaches, one of which is requiring schools and their teachers to look for signs of radicalisation.

In terms of the anti-radicalisation software, just six months later the UK education secretary stated that schools *must* monitor students' internet usage for signs of radicalisation or extremist views thus cementing the need for schools to outsource their responsabilised duties to private companies. Thus a by-product of the statutory safeguarding legislation imposed upon schools is that private companies are influencing what should be considered legitimate topics for debate and discussion in the classroom.

The Prevent duty places a considerable preemptive responsibility on teachers and school staff that leads to the 'social sorting' of schoolchildren into categories of risk. Perhaps not surprisingly, its oversimplified approach to identifying those at risk of radicalisation and terrorist activity, has led to the prejudicial and stigmatising treatment of ethnic minorities. For example, it has emerged that some schools are only monitoring black and ethnic minority students (Newman, 2015), an approach that in itself can clearly be counterproductive, further compounding the marginalization and stigmatization of some children. Imposing a legal obligation on teachers to monitor their pupil's online activity can also introduce a climate of mistrust and suspicion into schools, undermining any possibility of genuine discussion and understanding of current affairs and political discourses. As has been found in relation to CCTV, school-based surveillance can have a 'chilling effect' (Taylor, 2010), whereby in this instance children are too worried about the implications of researching global events online in case they are flagged as a potential future terrorist. Aside from the fact that school based monitoring is likely to be an ineffective means of identifying signs for radicalization, it also has the potential to actually create more insecurity by missing genuine opportunities for developing critical thinking skills, the ability to question religious authority and challenge ideologies. Allen (2015: n.p) argues that surveilling students for signs of radicalization has:

[T]he potential to reinforce the very basis of those extremist narratives that the new duties have been introduced to tackle: that "Islam" and "the West" can never coexist. If ... Muslim students feel increasingly pressurised, marginalised and excluded as a result of these new duties, then the law is likely to reinforce rather than counter the very same arguments that are used to justify the transition towards being radical and extreme.

The use of classroom surveillance as a means of 'spotting the future terrorist' will only serve to alienate schoolchildren and create a climate of suspicion and mistrust. But also sits uncomfortably with the active recruitment of marginalized and disadvantaged schoolchildren into the armed forces (Johnson, 2017).

(ii) CCTV

CCTV is one of the most recognizable forms of surveillance technology, and the education sector has emerged as a key user of visual monitoring. Again whilst recognizing the heterogeneity of surveillance technologies, schools around the globe have invested vast amounts of resource into the introduction of CCTV to the school campus. In the US, more than 20 years ago, it was estimated that a quarter of public schools had installed CCTV, and that nearly all of these (94 per cent) had CCTV in the classrooms. Since then, a survey in 2009-2010 revealed that 84 per cent of high schools, 73 per cent of middle schools, and 51 per cent of primary schools used security cameras (Roberts et al, 2012). Given the securitisation of schools in the US, particularly in the context of several high profile school shootings, the use of CCTV in US schools is likely to be close to, if not, universal across school campuses. Schools in Britain present a similar picture. In the absence of concrete data

on CCTV usage, in 2012, *Big Brother Watch* issued Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests to 4,092 secondary schools requesting details on the number and location of cameras. The FOIs elicited responses from 2,107 schools, 90 per cent of which had installed CCTV, with an overall average ratio of one camera to every 38 pupils. Some schools had much higher levels of coverage with a ratio of one camera for every five pupils. Nearly 10 per cent of 2,107 schools responding to their FOI request had CCTV installed in ‘changing rooms and bathrooms’ (2012). The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) found similar rates of CCTV usage in their survey of 249 primary and secondary school teachers and found that 85 percent reported that there were CCTV cameras in the school where they worked. Similar to the US, the number of schools using CCTV in Britain is likely to be close to 100 percent.

Influenced by the work of Muller and Boos (2004), Hope (2009) classified the reasons extolled for the implementation of school CCTV into three categories: (1) *access control* (primarily concerned with protecting physical boundaries from external threats); (2) *conduct control* (through direct physical intervention responding to real-time observation, as well as through self-regulation), and; (3) *evidence gathering* (for investigating disciplinary events and criminal acts). However, it should be recognized that often the reasons offered to justify or explain the implementation of CCTV do not always tally with how it is then operated in reality. For example, despite a pervasive presumption that CCTV is used to prevent serious crime, 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 has found many non-criminal uses. Some schools use ‘video footage to root out troublemakers ... and thugs among their students’ although they were originally ‘meant to protect school property after hours’ (McDougall and Danks, 2012 cited in Taylor, 2016), whereas others use them to invigilate exams (BBC News, 2008), assess teacher performance (BBC News, 2009a), and even in a bid to address the ‘misuse of paper towels and soap’ in students’ toilets (BBC News 2009b).

Similar to the use of CCTV in other contexts, the uptake of school surveillance is often driven by a state-based agenda that incentivises the use of surveillance practices through funding. For example, in Australia, the *Schools Security Programme*, was introduced in 2007 to provide ‘non-recurrent funding for security infrastructure, such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, lighting and fences, and for the cost of employing security guards’ (Attorney-General’s Department, n.d.). Since 2007 the program has provided \$35 million for security measures in non-government schools and preschools. Despite empirical evidence that the use of CCTV in the classroom can have a detrimental impact on education (McCahill and Finn, 2010; Taylor, 2010, 2013, 2017), as well as suggestions that it is ineffective at solving the issues it has been purportedly introduced to, such as tackle bullying and prevent violent attacks in school, it continues to be installed as the *de facto* surveillance-security mechanism in schools. In part due to misconceptions regarding its efficacy, as well as its considerable symbolic status as a crime control measure.

(iii) Drug and alcohol testing

Drugs and alcohol can be detected via various means including samples of hair, sweat, saliva, blood and urine and, as such, biological methods to determine substance use have become increasingly popular in a number of public and private sectors, including education. A US national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), found that in 2014 more than a quarter (26.6%) of US high schools conducted some form of student drug testing. Of that figure, almost half (45.9%) of schools conducted drug tests randomly

among members of specific groups, such as athletes and students who participate in other extracurricular activities as part of anti-doping objectives. However, drug testing initially required for those taking part in extracurricular activities, and particularly sports, 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 DAT program conducted random drug tests with the entire school population as the sampling frame.

The prevalence of drug testing programs outside the US is difficult to ascertain. 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 UK, as well as more formal drug testing programs in the Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, and Sweden (DuPont et al, 2013).

Research on DAT testing in schools remains limited, but that which has been done suggests that it is ineffective, and at times, detrimental to the well being of young people. Yamaguchi et al (2003) analysed the data of 76,000 students across hundreds of schools, between 1998 and 2001. They found that for most students surveyed in the study, school drug testing was not associated with either the prevalence or frequency of student drug use. Similarly, Goldberg et al (2007) conducted a randomized controlled study of a single cohort of high school athletes from five high schools with a DAT policy and six schools with a deferred policy. They 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 DAT athletes believed less in the benefits of testing and were less likely to think that testing was a reason not to use drugs than the control group. They concluded that ‘more research is needed before DAT is considered an effective deterrent for school-based athletes’ (Goldberg et al (2007: 421). In a review of ‘all relevant issues involved in drug detection and screening in the school setting’ (Roche et al., 2008: ix), a report commissioned by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) 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’ (Ibid.).

Despite the growing body of evidence suggesting that school-based drug and alcohol testing is not an effective or appropriate way to address substance use amongst young people, schools internationally continue to implement this approach, often in conjunction with zero tolerance approaches to drug use, and more broadly, discipline. The vast profits that can be generated from such a policy go some way to explaining this phenomenon. As Kern et al (2006) assert, ‘the current push to increase drug testing comes from the drug testing industry as well as well-intentioned educators and parents...’ In this context, it becomes clear that the introduction of drug testing in schools is more a reflection of responsibility being devolved to schools that, in turn, are entrusting private companies to manage the issue on their behalf. As such, far from an evidenced-based solution to a proven health issue, school drug testing is borne of governmental imperatives and market logics.

The School Surveillance Economy

The ‘*Surveillance School* economy is booming’ and numerous vendors are now seeking to access the lucrative education market (Taylor, 2013). 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 (cited in Fuentes, 2013: 133). Many opportunities it would appear are being curated in order to commodify behavioural control and school safety through surveillance apparatus, including the three examples of online monitoring, CCTV and suspicionless drug-testing elucidated in this chapter, amongst a swathe of other technological mechanisms. The examples outlined can be viewed as symptomatic of a broader shift towards ‘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). Several scholars have identified how the capitalist enterprise excavates a channel from the development of high-end military apparatus to their diffuse use in everyday environments (Bogard 1998; Casella, 2006; Giddens, 1985; Haggerty and Ericson, 1999), including schools. Technologies such as CCTV, metal detectors, and online surveillance that are typically associated with law enforcement and the military are increasingly finding that schools provide an attractive economic niche. As I have argued elsewhere ‘Big Brother is big business and there are countless vendors with safety to sell’ (Taylor, 2013). The rhetoric of dangerous and risky schools is politically expedient in furthering the agenda to outsource functions to private entities, or to privatise education entirely. As Casella (2010: 84) notes: ‘we hear the same old free market story: for various reasons public officials cannot provide safety, or the safety they provide is inferior to what the private sector can provide, so the private sector must step in and pick up the slack.’ These are not benign or value-free processes, but viewed through the prism of the neoliberal project, infused with political and economical ideologies that are radically changing educational institutions.

Conclusion: Responsibilising schools and capitalising on fear

Often ushered in with promises of safeguarding children, surveillance technologies can provide feelings of security and reassurance, but they can also, paradoxically, conjure feelings of anxiety, loss of privacy, and mistrust; instilling a sense of fear amongst schoolchildren by signifying that there is something ‘out there’ that they need to be protected from. They can, additionally, create the very problems they have supposedly been implemented to tackle. It has long been recognized that ‘the spread of fear and other local problems provide a form of positive feedback that can further increase levels of crime’ (Skogan, 1986: 215). Or in other words, ‘fear ends up proving itself’ (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997: 6). Surveillance in this respect becomes part of a ‘governing process that constructs and amplifies particular risk messages’ (Coleman, 2004: 6). The extent of the consequences is yet to be fully recognized, but there are clear indicators that the new modality of school surveillance is contributing to a reassembling of educational practices as they are increasingly shaped by corporate priorities. As the school becomes responsabilised for an ever broadening range of social issues and concerns, they in turn, become further enmeshed with corporate priorities that expand the surveillance economy.

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