
CCTV AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURING OF SURVEILLANCE

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***Abstract:** The installation of Closed Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV) on British streets has been the crime prevention initiative of the century. However, little attention has been paid to who and what the cameras actually watch and how operators select their targets. This paper draws on a two-year study in the operation of CCTV control rooms to examine how target selection is socially differentiated by age, race and gender and asks whether this leads to discrimination.*

INTRODUCTION

There is now a growing body of literature that has attempted to evaluate the effectiveness of closed circuit television (CCTV). These studies have shed considerable light on the complexity of measuring the impact of CCTV on the crime rate, and have led to a far more sober assessment of its reductionist potential (Tilley, 1993; Bulos and Grant, 1996; Short and Ditton, 1996; Squires and Measor, 1996; Ditton and Short, 1998; Skinns, 1998). However, one consequence of this concern with effectiveness has been to concentrate attention almost solely on outcomes rather than process. This is perhaps unsurprising: those who have commissioned evaluations have, to a large extent, been concerned with the bottom-line; i.e., does CCTV reduce crime? Evaluators have therefore concentrated their efforts on describing the correlation between the crime rate and the introduction

of CCTV. They have then tried to isolate CCTV as the cause of the correlation by ruling out other factors. The time-consuming task of analysing trend data, displacement, and "halo effects" has left little time to explore the more general, but in our view, equally important question of how CCTV operates in practice. CCTV is about far more than just the reduction of crime. It is about the power to watch and potentially intervene in a variety of situations, whether or not they be criminal. But who and what gets watched and the extent to which this is socially differentiated has largely been ignored by existing research.

This is important because CCTV has been portrayed, to use the words of one Home Office Minister, as a "Friendly Eye in the Sky" [*Guardian*, 1st January 1995) benignly and impartially watching over the whole population and targeting only those deemed as acting suspiciously. As one code of practice for a northern city centre system states, "CCTV is not a 'spy system.' There will be no interest shown or deliberate monitoring of people going about their daily business." Similarly, Graham (1998:99) writing of the North Shields system, states that the CCTV operators "have strict guidelines for the operation of the system. For example, guards are not permitted to track people around the town unless they are acting suspiciously." However, what constitutes "suspicious behaviour" is not addressed by codes of conduct or by training, as Bulos and Sarno (1996:24) note: "The most neglected area of training consists of how to identify suspicious behaviour, when to track individuals or groups and when to take close-up views of incidents or people. This was either assumed to be self evident or common sense."

It is unpacking this "common sense" that is the aim of this paper: we want to know who and what gets targeted, and by what criteria they are selected. This issue of selectivity is central to any discussion of CCTV operational practice, because the sheer volume of information entering a CCTV system threatens to swamp the operators with information overload. Consider how much incoming information there is in a medium-sized 24-hour city centre system with 20 cameras.

The answer, as we can see from Table 1, is a quite staggering 43 million "pictures" per day. Inevitably, operators cannot focus their attention on every image from every camera — somehow they must narrow down the range of images to concentrate on. This problem could, of course, be solved entirely randomly, so that each person on the street has an equal chance of being selected for initial surveillance but only a small proportion have a chance of actually being sampled. However, this would still leave operators with the problem

of whom to pay prolonged attention to once initial selection had taken place. For some the answer is obvious: those behaving suspiciously. But this begs the question as to what, in practice, constitutes suspicious behaviour?

Table 1: Incoming Information as Measured by Individual Frames of Video Footage in a 20-Camera, 24-Hour, City Centre System

25-frames per second per camera		25
x 20 cameras in system	Total number of frames entering the system per second	500
x 60 frames per minute	Total number of frames entering the system per minute	30,000
x 60 frames per hour	Total number of frames entering the system per hour	1,800,000
x 24 frames per day	Total number of frames entering the system per day	43,200,000

It is instructive here to draw on the writings of Harvey Sacks (1978) on the police construction of suspicion. For Sacks (1978:190), the key problem for a police patrol officer was how he or she could use a person's appearance as an indicator of their moral character and, thus, "maximise the likelihood that those who turn out to be criminal and pass into view are selected, while minimising the likelihood that those who do not turn out to be criminal and pass into view are not selected."

The problem is identical for the CCTV operator. Bombarded by a myriad of images from dozens of cameras, and faced with the possibility of tracking and zooming in on literally thousands of individuals, by what criteria can operators try to maximise the chance of choosing those with criminal intent? Camera operators and street patrol officers are at both an advantage and a disadvantage. Because the "presence" of operatives is remote and unobtrusive, there is less likelihood that people will orient their behaviour in the knowledge that they are being watched, and, by virtue of the elevated position and telescopic capacity of the camera, operators have a greater range of vision than the street-level patrol officer. However, these advantages must be offset against their remoteness, which means they are denied other sensory input — particularly sound — that can be essential in contextualising visual images. Unlike the patrol officer, the CCTV

operative is both deaf and dumb: he simply cannot ask citizens on the street for information, nor can they hear what is being said..

Faced with such an avalanche of images, and a limited range of sensory data, how then does the CCTV operator selectively filter these images to decide what is worthy of more detailed attention? The problem is that operatives do not have prior knowledge that would enable them to determine which persons are going to engage in criminal activity. It is therefore an occupational necessity that they develop a set of working rules to narrow down the general population to the suspect population. To shed light on this, we now draw on our two-year study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, of the operation of CCTV control rooms, and we briefly outline our methodology below.

METHODOLOGY

Observations were carried out in three sites between May 1995 and April 1996. One was in the commercial centre of a major metropolitan city with a total population in excess of 500,000. During the day it was a bustling shopping and business district and as darkness fell supported a thriving night life based on clubs, pubs and eateries. Another site centred on the market square of an affluent county town with a population of nearly 200,000. It was thronged with shoppers during the day but at night was fairly quiet until the weekends, when it would attract revellers from the surrounding area for a night on the town. The third site focussed on a run down but busy high street in a poor inner-city borough with an ethnically diverse population of nearly 250,000. We have named these three sites Metro City, County Town, and Inner City, to reflect their contrasting features.

The systems also differed in other ways. Metro City, cost over £1 million to install, consisted of 32 cameras and had running costs of over £200,000 per annum. Although the system was located in the control room of the local police station, it was run by an independent trust responsible for all aspects of its day-to-day operation, including the staffing of the control room and maintenance of the system. In contrast, the County Town system cost around £500,000 to install and had annual running costs in the region of £120,000. It consisted of over 100 cameras, although the main monitors generally only displayed the pictures from the 25 or so cameras focused on the town centre. The Inner City system cost around £450,000 with annual running costs of about £100,000, and had 16 cameras focussing on the busy high street and surrounds. County Town and Inner City

were run by their respective local authorities, were housed in purpose-built control rooms in local authority premises, and subcontracted the staffing of the controls rooms to private security firms. All three systems had 24-hour-a day monitoring. In County Town and Metro City this involved three eight-hour shifts; in Inner City, two 12-hour shifts.

In total, 592 hours of monitoring — the equivalent of 74 eight-hour shifts — were observed. All days of the week were covered, as were early, late and night shifts. On each shift the observer would "attach" himself to one operative and shadow that individual's work. In total, 25 different operatives were shadowed. A small notebook was used in the field when appropriate, and full field notes were written up at the end of each shift. These included full descriptions of any targeted surveillance. We defined targeted surveillance as one that lasted more than one minute on an individual or group of individuals, or where the surveillance was initiated from outside the system, for example, by police or private security, regardless of whether a target was identified. The field notes recorded key data for each targeted surveillance based on a checklist of salient features. Field notes were also recorded for general observations on the operation and control of the system, as well as operatives' beliefs and values, work tensions, interactions with visitors to the system, and included informal interviews with operators and managers.

The field notes of targeted surveillances also formed the basis for filling in the quantitative observation schedule. This recorded four types of data: (1) shift data, including the number of operatives on each shift, the time screens were left unattended, who visited the system, and whether and how many tapes were borrowed for inspection and for what purpose; (2) targeted suspicion data, including the reason for the suspicion, type of suspicion, how the surveillance was initiated, how many cameras were used, and whether the incident was brought to somebody else's attention; (3) person data, detailing the age, race sex and appearance of up to four people for each targeted surveillance; and (4) deployment data, recording all deployments initiated by the system operatives, how the system was used during the deployment and what the outcome was.

In total, this yielded data on 888 targeted surveillances. In 711 of these surveillances, a person was identified for whom basic demographic data (age, race, sex, and appearance) was recorded, as it was on another 966 people who were the second, third or fourth person in a group being surveilled.

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURING OF SURVEILLANCE

As Table 2 shows, selection for targeted surveillance appears, at the outset, to be differentiated by the classic sociological variables of age, race, and gender. Nine out of ten target surveillances were on men (93%), four out of ten on teenagers (39%) and three out of ten on black people (31%).

Table 2: Age and Sex of All People and Primary Person Surveilled

Sex		
Male	660	(93%)
Female	49	(7%)
Total	709	(100%)
Age		
Teenagers	270	(39%)
In their twenties	320	(46%)
Thirties plus	107	(15%)
Total	697	(100%)
Race		
White	483	(69%)
Black	210	(30%)
Asian	5	(0%)
Total	698	(99%)

In terms of the general population, men were nearly twice as likely to be targeted than their presence in the population would suggest. Similarly, teenagers — who account for less than 20% of the population — made up 40% of targeted surveillances. Of course, the street population (i.e., those available for targeting) is not the same as the general population. However, all three of our sites were busy commercial areas that during the day were populated by shoppers and workers, both male and female, many of whom were middle aged.

It is more difficult to estimate how a person's race affected the chance of being selected for targeting, since the proportion of ethnic minorities varied dramatically from site to site. However, we have calculated that black people were between one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half times more likely to be targeted for surveillance than their presence in the population would suggest (for further details, see Norris and Armstrong, 1997, 1999).

On their own, however, these findings do not indicate that CCTV operators are selecting targets for surveillance merely on the basis of observable social characteristics, since this distribution may relate to the behaviour of those targeted that initially prompted operator suspicion. To examine this we classified each surveillance as: "crime related," "order related," occurring for "no obvious reason," or "other." For instance, a youth crouching down by the side of a car would be classified as "crime related," a group of men involved in revelry at pub closing time as "order related," and surveying the scene of a traffic accident as "other." This "crime related" category does not imply that the person was involved in any criminal behaviour, merely that the operator had some explicit grounds for targeting the person or incident. A youth crouching by the side of a car is, in all probability, tying his or her shoelaces rather than removing hub caps, and the targeted surveillance may well confirm this. All the same, this action will still be coded as "crime related" since the operator is treating the behaviour as indicative of theft. Similarly, if the operator tracks a known shoplifter this would also be classified as crime related because the operator has explicit grounds for their suspicion. If there were no signs from a person's behaviour or he was not a "known offender," then we recorded the surveillance as for "no obvious reason."

Three out of ten people (30%) were surveilled for crime-related matters, two out of ten (22%) for forms of disorderly conduct, but the largest category — nearly four out of ten (36%) — were surveilled was for "no obvious reason." This was echoed when we examined the basis of suspicion, with one quarter (24%) of people subject to targeted surveillance because of their behaviour. But the most significant type of suspicion was categorical; one-third (31%) of people were surveilled merely on the basis of belonging to a particular social or subcultural group. The extent to which the reason for the surveillance was socially differentiated is shown in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, the reason for the surveillance and the suspicion on which it was based was also found to be highly differentiated. Thus, we can see that two-thirds (65%) of teenagers — compared with only one in five (21%) of those aged over 30 — were surveilled for "no obvious reason." Similarly, black people were twice as likely (68%) to be surveilled for "no obvious reason" than whites (35%), and men three times (47%) more likely than women (16%). The young, the male and the black were systematically and disproportionately targeted, not because of their involvement in crime or disorder, but for "no obvious reason" and on the basis of categorical suspicion alone.

If we cannot explain the patterning of target selection on the basis of observable difference in behaviour, it is necessary to examine the influence of the values and attitudes of the operators and how they relate to age, race and gender.

Table 3: Reason for Surveillance by Age, Race and Gender in Numbers and Percentages

Age	Teenagers		In their twenties		Thirties plus	
	Crime Related	59	(22%)	80	(26%)	17
Public Order	30	(11%)	83	(27%)	46	(45%)
No Obvious	173	(65%)	115	(38%)	21	(21%)
Other	4	(2%)	29	(9%)	18	(18%)
Total	266	(100%)	307	(100%)	102	(101%)
Gender	Male		Female			
	Crime Related	138	(22%)	19	(43%)	
Public Order	150	(24%)	12	(27%)		
No Obvious	302	(47%)	7	(16%)		
Other	49	(8%)	6	(14%)		
Total	639	(101%)	44	(100%)		
Race	White		Black			
	Crime Related	115	(25%)	42	(20%)	
Public Order	148	(32%)	13	(6%)		
No Obvious	163	(35%)	141	(68%)		
Other	41	(9%)	12	(6%)		
Total	467	(101%)	208	(100%)		

Age

As we have seen, young men were the main targets of surveillance. This is not surprising given the attitudes that operators displayed towards youths in general and particularly those identified — by attire, location, or body language — as poor or belonging to the underclass. Further, like police, CCTV operators often referred to such categories as "toe-rags," "scumbags," "yobs," "scrotes," and "cra-
pheads." As the following two examples illustrate, operatives need no special reason to ascribe malign intent merely on the basis of age, particularly if youths are in a group.

13.45: The operator sees and zooms in on four boys walking through a pedestrian precinct. Aged between 10 and 12 and casually, but fashionably, dressed, the four, — combining age, appearance, location and numbers — are suspects for a variety of possibilities. The four gather around in a form of "conference," and 30 seconds later walk a few yards to their left and enter a shop well known for selling toys. What the operator sees is not kids entering a shop meant for kids, but something else: they are all up to no good and, in his opinion, have probably just plotted to steal and will come running out any minute with stolen merchandise. In anticipation, he fixes a camera onto the shop door and tells the other operator to put the cameras onto the street he presumes they will run into.

Using two cameras and two operators, the surveillance lasts six minutes before the boys leave the shop — slowly and orderly and without any apparent stolen goods. Now, the operator informs me, he will zoom in on the four as they walk through town in a search for bulges under their clothing, particularly around the waistline — this according to him, is where stolen toys would be concealed. But the boys have jeans and T-shirts on and no bulges are apparent. Still, however, the four are followed by both operators to see if they will pull items out of their pockets; they don't. The four then disappear from view as they enter another department store. The operator looks elsewhere, but comments to his colleague, "They're definitely up to no good."

While youths are generally seen as suspicious and warranting of targeted surveillance, this would still leave CCTV operators with far too many candidates to choose from on the basis of the images alone. Two additional features — attire and posture — become salient for further subdividing youths into those who are worthy of more intensive surveillance and those who are not.

The following garments were thought by operatives to be indicative of the criminal intent of the wearer: "puffer" coats (ski-style fashion), track suit bottoms, designer training shoes, baseball caps (ponytail hairstyles only compounded suspicion), and anything that may conceal the head (a woolly hat, hood or cap) and football shirts or supporter paraphernalia. Any type of loose-fitting jacket could also provoke suspicion because in the operators' eyes it may conceal stolen items or weapons; a jacket or head gear worn in warm weather only compounded suspicion. The following field note extracts illustrate the manner in which a person's visual identity is used to further stigmatise and subclassify the youth population:

01.46: Surveilling the carpark the operator finds a suspicious person. This is a white male in his early 20s, dressed casually but expensively. The object of suspicion is the sunglasses he wears. The operator asks himself why a man needs them on at night. Furthermore, the targeted person is leaning against a good (i.e., sporty) car talking to another male. The first male compounds his suspicion further by wearing a leather zip-up bomber jacket, designer trainers and a fashionable haircut. The camera is fixed on him and his colleague as they get into the car and drive away. As they do so, the vehicle registration number is zoomed in on and noted on a pad the operator has with him. The operator keeps his own dossier on "flash cars" and their occupants, and believes such people are all potential drug dealers. (2 minutes, 1 camera)

03.01: A male and a female are noted walking across the carpark. Both are white and in their mid-20s. Whilst she is smartly dressed, it is her male companion who arouses the operator's suspicion. The companion has about him the stigmata of criminality — he has a coat on with a hood up. The operator knows it is not mining so cannot understand why (the possibility that it is because it is bitterly cold outside does not appear in his logic). The couple are carefully surveilled as they walk to the railway station, check a railway timetable board, and then retrace their steps and walk out of sight. (4 minutes, 4 cameras)

11.50: A black male, aged around 16, attracts the attention of the operator because of his white cloth cap. Followed and zoomed in on, he has no apparent criminal characteristics, but as the operator states, his attire makes him appear to be a "wide-boy" and therefore worth following. (2 minutes, 1 camera)

00.42: The operator follows two white males, aged 16, dressed casually but with hoods covering their heads on this cold winter night. The operator's suspicion is founded on two things: firstly, they have the ever-incriminating hood up, and secondly, they are walking through an open-air carpark whilst apparently too young to drive. The operator sees in them a "result," and as they pass a cluster of parked cars mutters to the screen they are visible on "have a go, have a go". They disappoint him. Whilst followed, they merely walk out of the carpark and towards a Council estate. (2 minutes, 1 camera)

There are two issues to note from these examples. First, suspicion is not unidimensional. The background assumptions concerning youths are refined by utilising other visual clues that can be inferred

from the clothes of a potential suspect, and this is read in conjunction with temporal and spatial features of a locale. In the surveillance of the couple in the car park, attire is also compounded by place and time — a young man in a car park with his face obscured at three in the morning is unambiguously read as a potential car thief. In the first example, involving the young man with the sunglasses, attire was compounded by accoutrements — a flashy car, and the hour. Implicitly, this form of reasoning is based on a reading of the Protestant work ethic: who can afford to buy an expensive car by the fruits of an honest day's work if they are out enjoying themselves at nearly two o'clock in the morning?

The second point is that wearing headgear is particularly stigmatising in the view of CCTV operators. This has two components. First baseball caps, woolly hats, and hooded parkas were seen as indicative of subcultural affiliation, and thus helped to single out respectable from "deviant" youths. Indeed, sometimes the only distinguishing feature that could justify why one youth, as opposed to another, was targeted for extended surveillance was the presence of baseball caps, particularly if worn with the peak facing backwards. But, more importantly, operators know that hats can potentially deprive them of recording a clear image of a person's face. Knowing this, they act on the assumption that citizens do as well. Operators believe they have a right to surveil any person's face who appears in their territory. Anyone who supports a visible means of denying them this opportunity immediately places himself in the category of persons of questionable intent and worthy of extended surveillance. Moreover, in the eyes of the operator, moving the headgear to deliberately obscure the face merely compounds suspicion, as the following incident reveals:

13.13: Three youths are zoomed in on outside Santana's. One has a baseball cap on and elicits suspicion when, in the interpretation of the operator, he adjusts it so as to conceal his identity from the cameras. Whilst standing talking, the three are zoomed in on and when they walk down the street they are followed until out of sight. (3 minutes, 2 cameras).

It is not just attire that provides a warrant for narrowing down the suspect population. In all sites operators believed in a practise known as the "scrote walk," which was a rather fluid concept reduced to a series of seemingly contradictory clichés:

- Too confident for their own good
- Head up, back straight, upper body moving too much
- Chin down, head down, shuffling along

- Swaggering, looking hard

Suspicion was compounded when a "scrote haircut" was evident. This could be very short, very long, or medium length with hair gel. But to make identification easier, "scrotes" generally could be identified because they hung around in groups.

21 AS: The operator notices a character who has come to his attention before. Believed to be involved in all sorts of criminal activities, the suspect and his two mates are surveilled and zoomed in on as they stand outside McDonald's. The operators discuss with contempt the characteristics of these three males reserving particular venom for their "swaggering" and "scrote way of walking." However, they have done no wrong for the moment, bar offending the operator with their presence, and so are left alone after they walk through the town. (5 minutes, 1 camera)

As Kenan Malik (1995:5) reported, in the March 3 edition of *Independent* on the operation of the CCTV in the West End of Newcastle, the selection of youth was also based on such categorisation. The operators told him: "... we keep an eye on them to see if they're up to something. They're the type you see...They're all scrotes round here — petty thieves, vandals, druggies, there's not much that you can do but keep an eye on them" (*Independent*, 9th March, 1995:5).

The selection of youths as potential candidates for targeting rests on the background assumption as to their overpropensity for criminality. This is then refined through the use of visual clues that enable some youths to be identified as belonging to commonsense categories of moral waywardness, and this then gives the warrant for targeted and extended surveillance.

This selective targeting of youth is not just a product of operator assumptions and values; it is also a consequence of operational policy. In Metro City, the police liaison officer informed us that the system was not to be used to target traffic offences or vehicle tax evasion, because this would mitigate against the "feel-good" factor that CCTV was supposed to promote amongst the town centre consumers. This was even echoed in the official codes of practice drafted for another scheme, which stated: "Police...may seek and take control of the system in respect of the following...to prevent or mitigate interruptions to traffic flow (not to enforce minor breaches of traffic law)." In this way, the underrepresentation of older, relatively affluent offenders is enshrined in the system's operating procedures, as they are protected from the full impact of the cameras' gaze. Thus, despite those over age 30 making up around half of the population, they rep-

resented only 15% of those subject to targeted surveillance. When they did become targets, in nearly two thirds (62%) of cases it was because of their overt behaviour directly indicating involvement in crime or disorder, and only 21% were targeted for "no obvious reason."

So far we have talked about the processes that make youths the disproportionate targets of surveillance. But, as we have seen, it is not only youths, but black youths in particular who are oversurveilled.

Race

Racist language was not unusual to hear among CCTV operators. Although only used by a minority, the terms "Pakis," "Jungle Bunnies" and "Sooties" when used by some operatives did not produce howls of protests from their colleagues or line managers. Stereotypical negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities and black youths in particular were more widespread. These attitudes ranged from more extreme beliefs, held by a few operators, about these groups' inherent criminality to more general agreement as to their being "work-shy," or "too lazy" to get a job, and in general, "trouble."

Given these assumptions, the sighting of a black face on the streets of either Metro City or County Town would almost automatically produce a targeted surveillance.

10.48: Whilst surfing the cameras and streets, the operator sees two young men standing in a pedestrian shopping precinct, both looking into a hold-all bag one of them is carrying. Whilst this scene is not remarkable, what is unusual is that one of the two is black — a rare sight in the city centre. The two are in their early 20s and smartly dressed. After a minute or so, one hands to the other a piece of paper that most onlookers would presume was an address or phone number. Finally, when going their separate ways, the two indulge in a fashionable "high-five" handshake. This alerts both operators.

To these two, the "high-five" is suspicious because it was not done with fiat hands and it "wasn't firm enough" In fact, according to the second operator, one of the men had a distinctly cupped hand. Whilst this was explainable by his holding the piece of paper just given him by the other, the operators see only criminality — this could be a surreptitious yet overtly public exchange of drugs. The youth with the bag is surveilled closely as he continues his walk. He not only has a bag possibly containing the merchandise, but he is also black — a potential drug dealer. The suspect enters a men's

fashion store, which means that the camera is now trained on the doors whilst the operator awaits a possible hasty reappearance complete with stolen items in shoulder bag. After a few minutes, the camera is zoomed into the store and the suspect is visible in a capacity the operators did not consider—he is a sales assistant.

As the next example demonstrates, this colour-coded suspicion was intensified when combined with cars or headgear, and when people were in places the operators presumed they should not be.

15.00: A black male with dreadlocks, wearing sports gear and in his mid-20s invites the operators' suspicion and surveillance because he is in the wrong place doing the wrong thing. He is, in fact, crouched by a bicycle rack fiddling about with a bike. Zooming in, the operator looks for evidence of a theft — is he looking around him as he fiddles? No. Is he forcing something that won't move? No. He gets something out of his back pocket that happens to be a bicycle rear lamp. Fitting it on, he rides the bicycle, which is obviously his, safely and legally. (4 minutes, 1 camera)

23.05: A group of 12 black youths, all in their late teens and casually dressed, is noted outside a fast-food outlet. Whilst doing nothing more than eating and talking to various youths — male and female, white and black — who approach them, the operator surveils them. She is encouraged by the manager of the CCTV system, who instructs her to "watch that lot...our ethnic problem." So the operator follows them for the next 20 minutes as they move up the street. (20 minutes, 1 camera)

14.34: As a former police officer of 10 years' experience, the operator "knows" that young black men are "trouble." When she catches sight of a white escort convertible, complete with wheel trims/spoilers and with its hood down, driven by a black male aged in his mid to late 20s she is alerted enough to zoom in on him. The vehicle is parked and he is chatting to his passenger, a white girl with blonde hair aged in her early 20s. This combination of colour and technology is all too much for the operator. She phones the police controller, explaining that "men of that age and that colour only get their money one way and it's not through hard work," and puts the image onto his monitor. On suspicion of being a drug dealer the operator zooms in on the registration plate whilst police do a PNC [Police National Computer] on the vehicle. Whilst not disclosing fully what he did or is suspected of doing, the controller gets back to the operator to tell her that the driver is "of police interest." The suspect

drives away out of sight, unaware of who has been watching and talking about him. (8 minutes, 2 cameras)

The overrepresentation of black youths cannot be simply understood as white operators selecting young black men on the basis of second hand stereotypes. However, as we have seen, some of the white operators targeted blacks with a relish that implied a deep prejudice. Black operators similarly targeted young blacks, but their comments directed at the screen were not usually so venomous. The following example goes some way towards illustrating the point.

19.20: The night shift has inherited a job from the day shift; namely, a group of 15 to 20 black males and females, all in their teens and casually/subculturally dressed, who are standing in a group outside an off-licence and general store called Santana's that is adjacent to a series of bus stops. Zooming in on this group the operator can see nine black males and four black females. The operator, Victor, a black man in his late 50s, is not impressed by this assortment, saying for my and the other operator's benefit that the police should round 'em up and get their mums and dads to come and fetch 'em and shame them. The group is generally standing, talking, and flirting, with the occasional bout of horseplay and dancing. The youths harass no one. Nearby are standing dozens of people awaiting one of the 12 bus routes that pick up at this point. Even so, the camera remains on the group for 30 minutes and then notices a group of eight black males in their early 20s who walk through the gathering and continue elsewhere. Two of this group then split off, and the operator decides to follow the remaining six but is thwarted when they walk out of range of the cameras. (51 minutes, 4 cameras)

02.00: Standing outside the all-night shop are three black males in their 30s. One has the stigma of being a Rastafarian and having a woolly hat balancing on long dreadlocks. The operator is confused and tells his co-operator of his dilemma: why are they still out at night and not buying anything? The answer: they don't work, they just sleep all day. With mutual disgust the two black operators watch these black men as they stand and talk and then drive away in a car. (5 minutes, 1 camera)

However, in Inner City, the selection of black youths was not just a matter of operator discretion but a deliberate matter of policy. The first weeks of operation saw the police officer responsible for setting up the scheme give advice to both shifts on where and what to watch. The priority target was stated to be black youths and the priority

crimes drug dealing and street robbery. This effectively meant that the majority of the cameras were never really monitored, since they covered the more general shopping area. Instead, for the purposes of target selection, attention was focussed almost solely on a junction that housed a row of bus stops and a number of small shops that daily after school closing saw a congregation of black youths alighting from and awaiting buses to take them home.

Male youths, particularly if black or stereotypically associated with the underclass, represent the fodder of CCTV systems. But this overrepresentation is not justified on the basis of those subsequently arrested. While teenagers accounted for 39% of targeted surveillance, they only made up 18% of those arrested, whereas those in their 20s accounted for 46% of targeted surveillance but made up 82% of all arrests. Similarly, black people accounted for 32% of targeted surveillance but only 9% of those arrested.

Gender

While women make up 52% of the general population they only accounted for 7% of primary persons surveilled. Women were almost invisible to the cameras unless they were reported as known shoplifters by store detectives (33%) or because of overt disorderly conduct (31%). Nor were women more likely to become targets by virtue of a protectional gaze. Indeed, in nearly 600 hours of observation only one woman was targeted for protectional purposes — as she walked to and from a bank cash dispenser. Moreover, there was evidence that the same attitudes that have traditionally been associated with the police occupational culture surrounding domestic violence continue to inform the operation of CCTV.

Shortly after 01.00 a.m. the operator notices a couple in the street having an animated row. Both are white, in their late 20s and stylishly dressed as if returning from a night out. This quiet Monday night has produced nothing of interest, and these two arguing is the most interesting event of the past three hours. This and the fact that the woman in view is blond and good looking has added to the attraction. The operator tells the Comm Room staff (two men) to have a look at the event unfolding.

After a two-minute argument the woman storms off up the street, but does not go out of the man's sight and slumps against a wall looking miserable. The man, meanwhile, climbs into a nearby car, closes the door and waits in the driver's seat, lights off. The impasse lasts five minutes, the female walks slowly towards the car and begins to talk

to the man via the driver's window, only to storm off again after a minute. This time the male follows her on foot to continue the row. The operators and police enter into a commentary urging the man not to chase after her. Having decided she is hot-tempered and sulky, the operator says aloud "You hit her and we'll be your witnesses."

The couple continue their debate and this time the female decides to walk off past the man. but as she does so he attempts to restrain her by holding her arm. She pulls back. In the stand-off further words are exchanged, and a blow is aimed from the male to the female that strikes her around the upper chest and causes her to stumble. The blow does not look to be a hard one and she picks herself up and walks away. Meanwhile the male returns to his car and once again sits and waits. This time the female walks down the street past the car and continues for 20 yards only to stop, walk back to the car and stand looking into it.

After a couple of minutes of her looking and him pretending not to notice the pair resume their chat, this time via the passenger door. The drama continues when she walks away again. This time the distance is only 10 yards. Then she does an about-turn and, returning to the car, opens the front passenger door. Whilst she sits in the car she leaves the door wide open. After a mutual silence (seen by zooming the camera into the car's windscreen), the pair decide to talk again. This time she lasts three minutes before getting out and storming off.

By now other personnel have appeared to watch this drama. Two other officers have entered the room so that six men can now, in pantomime mode, boo and cheer good moves and bad moves. One boo is reserved for the male when he starts up the car, does a three-point turn, drives up to where she is sulking, and, parking, tries to persuade her to get it. A cheer goes up when he has seemingly failed in this effort and so drives away. But cheers turn to boos when he reverses to resume his persuasion. His words work and, to boos, she climbs into the car. After a four-minute discussion, the stationary car drives away into the distance. (25 minutes, 2 cameras).

As this incident makes clear, there is no simple correspondence between the discovery of criminal activity and the resulting deployment and arrest. Lesser assaults, when perpetrated by men on men outside nightclubs, resulted in police officers being deployed and arrests being made. However, the images from the screen are filtered through an organisational lens that accords meaning, status, and priority to events. It will come as no surprise to critics of the police

handling of domestic violence (Edwards, 1989; Stanko, 1985) that the existence of "objective" evidence led to neither a protective response in the first instance to prevent the assault from occurring nor, once it had occurred, a legalistic response to arrest the perpetrator. As Edwards has argued, the police have always concerned themselves more with public order than private violence, and this was deemed as essentially a private matter, albeit occurring in public space.

Moreover, this example gives credence to Brown's (1998) assertion that the essentially male gaze of CCTV has little relevance for the security of women in town centres, and may indeed undermine it by offering the rhetoric of security rather than providing the reality. CCTV also fosters a male gaze in the more conventional and voyeuristic sense: with its pan-tilt and zoom facilities, the thighs and cleavages of scantily clad women are an easy target for those male operators so motivated. Indeed, 10% of all targeted surveillances on women and 15% of operator-initiated surveillance on women were for voyeuristic reasons, which outnumbered protective surveillance by five to one. Moreover, the long-understood relationship between cars and sex provides operators and police with other chances for titillation, as illustrated by the following example.

01.00: On the first night shift the operator is keen to show me all his job entails. Eventually I am taken, via the camera, to "Shaggers Alley," an area of a carpark near the railway station used by local prostitutes and their punters (customers). Whilst this location is out of the uxy to passers-by, many a punter and indeed a happy couple not involved in a financial transaction are unaware of the reach of the all-seeing camera, whose job is facilitated by a large and powerful carpark light that does not leave much to the imagination of the observer.

CXeariy visible on this night thanks to the cameras' ability to zoom in and look into cars, is a male in his late 20s sitting in the driver's seat with what can only be described as an expression of glee as a female, kneeling on the passenger seat performs fellatio on him. Her hair and head are noticeably bouncing up and down for around two minutes. When the performance is over the woman is clearly visible, topless, in the front seat. From beginning to end this scenario is put onto the police monitor, with the operator informing me that the police officers in the communications office enjoy such scenarios and, when bored, will sometimes phone to ask him to put the cameras on Shaggers Alley for their titillation. (11 minutes, 1 camera).

In one of our sites, the "appreciation" of such public displays was a regular feature of the night shift and not just confined to those with access to the monitors. Many such encounters could be found on the "Shaggers Alley greatest hits tape," which was compiled and replayed for the benefit of those who had missed the "entertainment."

DISCRETION, DIFFERENTIATION AND DISCRIMINATION

The power of CCTV operators is highly discretionary as they have extraordinary latitude in determining who will be watched, for how long and whether to initiate deployment. The sum total of these individual discretionary judgments produces, as we have shown, a highly differentiated pattern of surveillance leading to a massively disproportionate targeting of young males, particularly if they are black or visibly identifiable as having subcultural affiliations. As this differentiation is not based on objective behavioural and individualised criteria, but merely on being categorised as part of a particular social group, such practices are clearly discriminatory.

Of course, it may be argued that since those officially recorded as deviant — young, male, black, and working class — are disproportionately represented, targeting such groups merely reflects the underlying reality of the distribution of criminality. Such an argument is, however, circular: the production of the official statistics is also based on preconceived assumptions as to the distribution of criminality, which itself leads to the particular configuration of formal and informal operational police practice. As self-report studies of crime reveal, offending is, in fact, far more evenly distributed throughout the population than reflected in the official statistics (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996). Indeed, race and class differentials, so marked in the official statistics, disappear when self-reported offending behaviour of juveniles is examined (Bowling et al., 1994). Thus, McConville et al. (1991:35) argue, the convicted population "is a subset of the official suspect population. Whilst convicted criminals may be broadly representative of suspects, there is good reason to believe that they are very dissimilar to the 'real criminal population.' The make up of the convicted population is, therefore, like the make up of the suspect population: a police construction."

Another argument is that even if there is differentiation *in* target selection, it is irrelevant because it does not result in actual intervention and therefore no "real" discrimination occurs. As our own results clearly show, even though teenagers make up 39% of those

targeted they constitute only 23% of those deployed against and 18% of the arrested population. Thus, we would respond that on effectiveness measures alone, such targeting is inefficient, but we would also challenge the notion that it is irrelevant. Just because no intervention or arrest results does not mean that a significant social interaction, albeit remote and technologically mediated, has not taken place. Imagine two youths who, on entering city centre space, are immediately picked up by the cameras. They notice the first camera moving to track them as they move through the streets and go out of range of one camera. At the same time, another camera is seen altering its position to bring them into view. In fact, wherever they go they can see cameras being repositioned to monitor their every movement. How do these youths feel? They have done nothing wrong, they have not drawn attention to themselves by their behaviour and they are not "known offenders." But they are being treated as a threat, as people who cannot be trusted, as persons who do not belong, as unwanted outsiders. The guarantee that such systems will show no interest or engage in deliberate monitoring of people going about their daily business is empty rhetoric.

This technologically mediated and distanced social interaction is, then, loaded with meaning. Moreover, for literally thousands of black and working-class youths, however law-abiding, it transmits a wholly negative message about their position in society. But it has wider consequences than just its impact on individual psychology. The central tenet of policing by consent — that policing is viewed as legitimate by those who experience it — is undermined. If social groups experience CCTV surveillance as an extension of discriminatory and unjust policing, the consequential loss of legitimacy may have disastrous consequences for social order. As Brogden et al. (1988:90) have argued, it was precisely this experience of unjust policing that was both the "underlying cause and the trigger of all the urban riots of the 1980s."



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