

SECTION 10

WORK AND ORGANIZATION

There is a long history of workplace surveillance, dating back at least to the formal scientific management processes developed by Frederick Winslow Taylor in the early twentieth century (Taylor 1911). Although scholars have given a great deal of attention to Taylor's stopwatch-facilitated "time and motion" studies, which observed the minutiae of workers' actions and sought to optimize performance, his key contribution was a powerful argument in favor of a highly educated managerial class to oversee low-level workers in organizations. Over time, management became seen as a necessary organizational component, equated with employee supervision. Belief in the necessity of managerial oversight has only been amplified by the growth of complex organizations with heightened levels of task differentiation and geographic dispersion.

Contemporary workplace surveillance has also intensified in most employment sectors with the incorporation of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which simultaneously support employee tasks and afford degrees of Tayloristic performance monitoring by management (Andrejevic 2007). In the United States, it is estimated that roughly 75 percent of employees are electronically monitored at work, especially through computer, mobile phone, and tablet applications (Ball 2010). There is a moralistic

dimension to much workplace surveillance, as demonstrated by practices of employment prescreening with credit reports, criminal background checks, drug tests, and social media reports. These mechanisms become normalized as smart "risk management" strategies, which often continue after one is hired and may be augmented by keystroke tracking, video surveillance, productivity reports, and so on (Gilliom and Monahan 2013).

Workplace surveillance can engender mixed responses from employees, with some viewing it as a meritocratic tool to maintain high performance standards and others perceiving it as instrumentally extractive and invasive (Sewell, Barker, and Nyberg 2012; Zweig and Webster 2002). Forms of lateral surveillance are increasing as well, particularly among project team members who depend on one another, effectively encouraging individuals to discipline themselves and submit to labor intensification in the interests of the team (Gregg 2011; Sewell 1998). When "function creep" occurs, where systems put into place for non-surveillance purposes are then used to monitor and discipline employees, conditions for resistance and sabotage are strongest (Ball 2010; Monahan and Fisher 2011). But even in the absence of overt forms of resistance, there is typically an ongoing negotiation of



Modern Times, 1936, Charlie Chaplin.

boundaries (Di Domenico and Ball 2011), wherein control and resistance dialectically constitute each other to produce organizational life (Mumby 2005).

The excerpts in this section trace these developments while emphasizing potentially counterintuitive manifestations of surveillance of and by workers. The piece by Graham Sewell and Barry Wilkinson illustrates how new managerial techniques cultivate employee self-discipline and attenuate the possibility (or desire) for resistance. Kirstie Ball's excerpt calls attention to the apparent necessity of surveillance in hierarchical organizations and the rationales used to normalize workplace surveillance practices. Gavin J. D. Smith shifts the focus to analyze the experiences of those charged with monitoring others as their primary work responsibility, not as managers but as operators in a video surveillance control

room. Finally, Christian Fuchs advances a forceful argument that users of social media sites are ultimately exploited laborers submitting to electronic surveillance and generating valuable content for technology companies and advertisers. Together, these pieces problematize the power differentials and inequalities that characterize workplace and organizational surveillance.

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