Book Review

Surveillance & crime: Key approaches to criminology

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Surveillance & Crime is broken into eight chapters. Each chapter can be read independently, but is better understood when examining principles and ideas holistically. The structure of the book makes it ideal for an academic setting. The beginning of each chapter presents an overview and list of terms. Additionally, a short summary along with ‘study questions’ and further readings are presented to encourage discussion or prompt deeper thinking. It is laid out simply and directly; by reading the beginning or end the reader knows what will or has been addressed in that chapter. The end summary also gives the reader a different perspective or way of explaining the material. In short, the setup of the text is student friendly and easily accessible.

Chapter one of *Surveillance & Crime* presents an introduction to the major theme of the book. It starts by examining what the reader knows in terms of ‘crime’ and ‘surveillance’, and the superficiality of each concept according to mainstream society. The authors present the reader with the notion that crime and surveillance exist together; one keeping the other alive. In addition, the notion of a ‘surveillance society’ is first introduced, and the idea that surveillance is used by the powerful to control the rest of society, more specifically the lower class.

Chapter two gives the reader a theoretical base that helps in grasping the other chapters. It outlines different beliefs as to how surveillance is run and who it is run by. The reader learns the impossibility of ‘neutral’ surveillance and how it is used as a source of control. This is done by sorting or categorizing people as ‘criminals’ and becomes even more important as law enforcement shifts towards preventative policing, which requires creating these profiles for risk assessment. This chapter presents the reader with ideas of panoptic and synoptic surveillance that is continually utilized throughout the book. Panoptic surveillance addresses the idea that ‘the few can see the many’, meaning those in power can see and therefore exercise control over population at any time. In addition to this, the growth of technology has added a new face to surveillance, which is described as synoptic surveillance. This is the idea of ‘the many can see the few’, or the majority of the population being able to watch an individual at any time, whether it’s a criminal, police officer or corporation.

The next chapter in *Surveillance & Crime* gives the reader a sense of the historical background behind crime and in turn surveillance. Chapter three tracks the changes made, what has stayed the same throughout history, and what surveillance may look like if principles remain the same. Mainly following British history the reader learns that crime and punishment began informally with stigmatization by the community and, in the following years,

grew into more formal sanctions. The theme of control begins to take its shape here and grows as businesses and the higher class more explicitly define what is socially acceptable, what is deviant, and what will lead to criminal activity. With this power, supported by media, the elite could tailor messages to oppress groups within the society, and effectively protect themselves while doing it. The chapter suggests that if these main principles remain the same the elite will continue to control definitions of crime and in turn how society runs.

Chapter four builds off of the last few chapters by focusing on surveillance in the new technological age. It also establishes the idea of risk assessment as an emerging strategy to predict who 'may be an offender' (p. 69). This new policing strategy has a major marginalization effect by targeting groups of people, typically the lower class or groups with little power. This new technique is also being supported by the emergence of private organizations and their partnership with the public actors. The relationship and increased surveillance (as the two are working together more often) is supported by capitalist market; businesses and organizations want to protect their assets and profits. Sharing information might be seen as a betrayal of trust to the consumer or public, but as the text says, 'private actors will choose the most cost-effective option by trying to prevent problems before they occur' (p. 78). The addition of this new private sector also brings confusion and widens the gray areas as to what is acceptable and what violates citizens' rights. Surveillance, including public and private, is used as a control mechanism and targets or profiles certain groups out of society.

The next chapter focuses on globalization of surveillance in a 'post-terrorism era'. It ties everything together by discussing the limitations of global surveillance. The authors begin chapter five by discussing the effects terrorism, like 9/11, has on citizens' rights including privacy. They explain that attacks like these spark change to increase security and slowly morph in as the new 'normal'. In essence, an attack breeds more control and an excuse to target groups and label them as 'terrorists'. Worldwide surveillance has increased, whether it's enhanced airport security, discrete 'biometric' surveillance or CCTV cameras. These new practices and technologies are not without problems and limitations. The authors describe it as the problem of 'surveillance politics' (p. 102). Each country, agency and corporation brings their own rules and agendas to the global scale, complicating the surveillance world. Global surveillance being, as new as it is, will continue to be used in society with both its benefits and its many problems.

Chapter six gives an introduction to the large array of impacts that surveillance has on society. The authors point out that surveillance constantly targets the same group, stigmatizing and discriminating against them. The focus often relies on race, gender, age and other categorical characteristics as the factors of determining risk. The book uses the examples of airports and border screenings on 'non-white travelers' (p. 117) in the United States. Although men are more commonly attached to a criminal profile, women also see the negative effects of surveillance, or the misuse of surveillance. Most importantly though, surveillance creates an 'us versus them' society. It layers society with those who control surveillance and those who are being watched. The separation becomes even greater when it is realized that corporations, the elite and law enforcement can avoid punishment or surveillance all together. The elite in society have the power to define crime, to redirect surveillance and to endorse sanctions on other crimes.

Chapter seven ties the book together, concentrating on the resistance of surveillance. To start, the authors give a simple description of what resistance is: an act of 'opposition' in any

form that gives a clear challenge to something. The authors present the reader with two theories of resistance, one describing power as being controlled by a group, and the other describing power as something that is controlled and acted upon everyone. The reader is presented with different types of resistance, ranging from some very familiar tactics (like avoidance or blocking) to more extreme practices (like counter surveillance, and so on). Unfortunately for those who are under the mercy of surveillance, the elite or actors can resist or avoid surveillance just same, if not more.

The final chapter presents a summary of the book. It ties each chapter in, describing how they relate to each other. This chapter also explains where the injustice exists, further cementing the idea of elites using the power for their own good and using it as a tool of oppression. Those in control can control who is targeted, why they are targeted, and easily create the picture that they are making society a safer place. The final points remind the reader for that surveillance exists as a means for the powerful to marginalize society and target certain groups within society.

Surveillance & Crime presents a critical examination of the role of surveillance in modern society. While students with little to no background in the social sciences will find the book accessible, students who have been exposed to critical theories of sociology may be able to extract more meaning and may be able to contextualize the arguments presented by the authors more effectively. Because of this, the text would seem ideal for mid-level to advanced level social science students interested in the interaction between politics, surveillance and society.

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