

3.3. Reading the signs and obeying the signals: surveillance

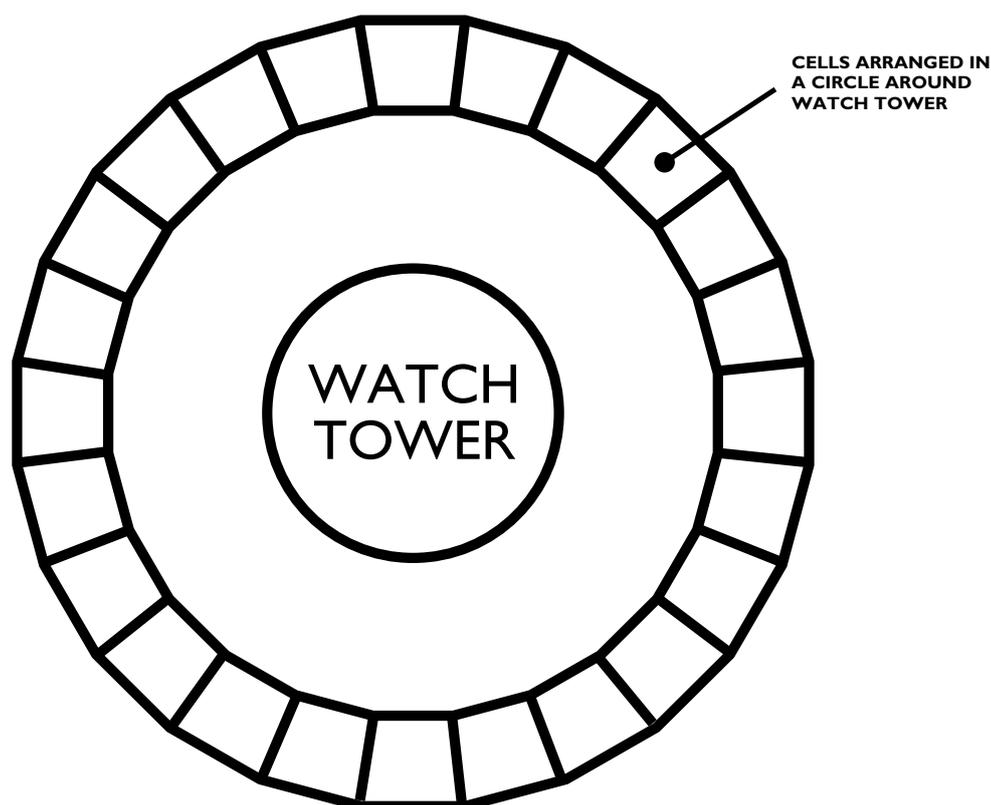
3.3.1 Reading

In pairs, explain to your partner what you think the following text is about. Discuss unfamiliar words and try to work out their meaning from the context. You may need to read the text more than once.

SURVEILLANCE

Once discourses are in operation, they need to be enforced if they are to be effective. Foucault has suggested that it is in a society's best interests to put in place certain methods of **surveillance**, so that the way individuals understand themselves and behave can be controlled. Foucault did not see surveillance and control as necessarily being bad things. In fact, he saw them as being essential for a democratic society to thrive and prosper.

One of the key metaphors Foucault uses to explain what he means by surveillance is the Panopticon.

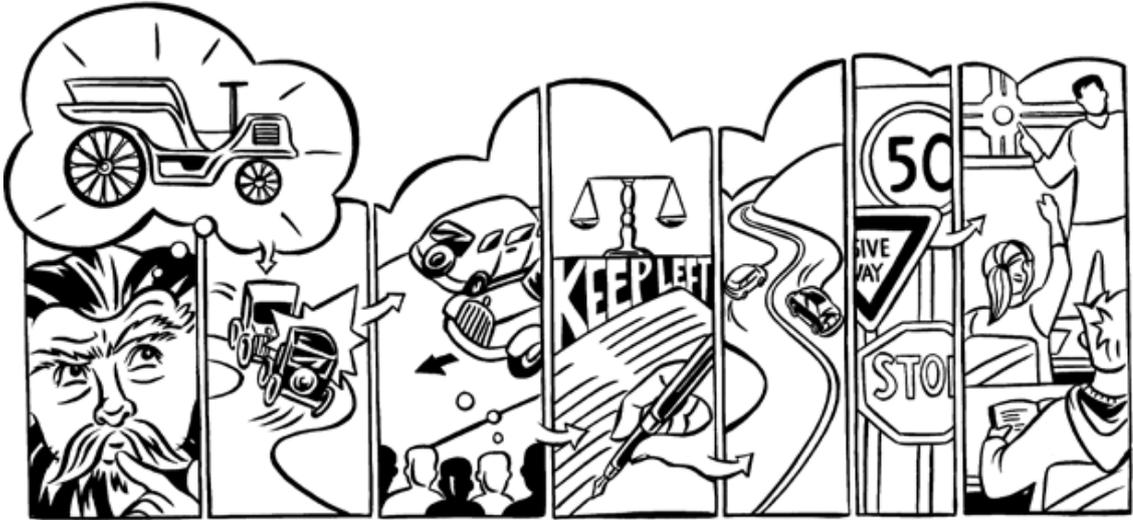


The Panopticon was a model gaol, which was designed in the late nineteenth century. Its most noteworthy feature was that the prisoners' cells were built around a central watchtower. This meant that the guards were able to monitor and watch the prisoners without the prisoners' being able to see them. In other words, the prisoners did not know when they were being watched. The theory behind the design of this prison was that the prisoners would always be on their best behaviour, as they could never know for sure whether or not they were under observation. The **invisibility** of this surveillance helps Foucault to explain how society controls our behaviour, encouraging us to give up our free will and behave in a certain way, even when our actions are not being directly monitored.





Let us consider an example to understand how discourses and surveillance can work to influence and control the behaviour of individuals.



The invention of the motor car made it possible for a mass of people to be moving all at once and very quickly from place to place. Many different things had to happen in order for society to manage the resulting traffic safely and efficiently. The following are just a few of the many complex and important decisions that were made. As a group, the members of society agreed to drive on a particular side of the road, in order to avoid collisions. Certain people wrote this decision into law, so it was known to all and not forgotten in the future. Others painted lines onto the road to keep drivers to the correct side. Some made and erected the signs and signals needed to direct drivers; others began to 'educate' drivers about how and where they should drive. The laws established an official, legal discourse defining a 'good' driver.

Other, 'unofficial' discourses have come to support this. For example, drivers share anecdotes about examples of bad driving they have witnessed. These stories help to establish a discourse of competence in driving that in turn influences the behaviour of individuals when they are behind the wheel. A discourse about being a good citizen also comes into play in defining a good driver. This entails paying due regard to the needs and interests of others, obeying the law, and always acting in a safe and responsible manner. For younger drivers, a discourse of being a 'good' son or daughter might influence their driving, meaning they obey the road rules so as not to worry their parents, who might have allowed them to drive the family car.

It is obviously impossible to monitor the actions of every individual driver on the road directly. In order to ensure that 'good' driving takes place as often as possible, society will need to put in place both visible and invisible methods of surveillance. The visible methods of surveillance are very obvious to drivers. These include things like road markings, signs, police patrols and surveillance cameras. Many of these surveillance techniques are limited, in that they are confined to a particular place. In the case of police patrols and speed cameras, they are often only there for a set period of time. This means that other methods of surveillance are equally if not more important.



The sort of unofficial discourses related to 'good' driving that were mentioned above are not immediately visible to the eye of the individual driver. They function to get individuals to act in a way that society sees as necessary and desirable (to **discipline** their behaviour, as Foucault describes it). The driver chooses to drive in a way that is in keeping with a specific understanding of how a 'good' driver should drive. These invisible forms of surveillance act as 'voices in the head' that the driver takes with him or her everywhere, creating a sense that his or her behaviour is constantly being monitored by others. In this way, it could be said that a driver is never truly alone at the wheel. Every time a driver gets behind the wheel, discourses related to 'good' driving take on a surveillance role, and will influence, or discipline, his or her driving behaviour.



3.3.2 Questions for reflection and discussion

Working in a group, think about the way that a certain institution or group of people important to you as individuals (eg the government and government departments, schools, the media, parents, friends) try to influence your behaviour. Base your answers to the following questions on that institution or group of people.

1. How does society convince us to surrender certain of our freedoms in the interests of the collective good?
2. What are some of the ways that society then ensures we comply with this need to surrender certain of our freedoms for a greater good?



3.3.3 Textual analysis

Texts: *Country road safety* suite of television advertisements

Introductory activity

Watch the *Country road safety* series of television advertisements which address the rising road toll on country roads. Make notes on how the following ideas are conveyed to the viewer by what he or she sees and hears.

IDEA	HOW IT IS CONVEYED
Police officers are not threatening, and are concerned about the good of the community	
Police officers are deeply affected by the actions of others.	
Society makes laws for good reasons.	
The police fulfil an essential role in our society by patrolling the roads.	
Home and loved ones should be important influences on how drivers choose to act.	
All drivers need to reflect on the potential consequences of bad or illegal driving behaviour.	



Analysis

Consider the series of *Country road safety* three television advertisements.

1. In your own words, outline the common structure of the advertisements featuring police officers. Make particular reference to the sequence created by the editing of the advertisements and the effect this has on viewers.
2. In what ways does the editing of these advertisements highlight both official and unofficial means of surveillance that might influence the behaviour and actions of drivers?
3. Do you think the advertisements are likely to influence driver behaviour? Explain why or why not.

3.3.4 Composing

You have been asked by the RTA and your police local area command to create a new advertisement in this series for your particular suburb or town. Create a storyboard for the advertisement. You may use the *Drink drive brain* storyboard as an example. Write a supporting explanation of the choices you have made to adjust the common structure of the series to fit your particular context. Make direct reference to the type of shots and framing, editing, and aspects of mise-en-scene. In your explanation you should also outline your thinking about the discourses at play in your storyboard and the types of official and unofficial surveillance of drivers you are seeking to highlight.

Storyboard

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	GRADE/ MARKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Composes a coherent and sophisticated text ■ Demonstrates a highly developed understanding of how the ideas, cultural understandings and discourses of a text may be reshaped for a different context ■ Demonstrates well-developed knowledge and understanding of how meaning is conveyed through different language forms and features ■ Uses language appropriate to audience, purpose and context in a highly effective way. 	A: 15 14 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Composes a coherent and highly effective text ■ Demonstrates a developed understanding of how the ideas, cultural understandings and discourses of a text may be reshaped for a different context ■ Demonstrates developed knowledge and understanding of how meaning is conveyed through different language forms and features ■ Uses language appropriate to audience, purpose and context in an effective way. 	B: 12 11 10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Composes a coherent and effective text ■ Demonstrates understanding of how the ideas, cultural understandings and discourses of a text may be reshaped for a different context ■ Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of how meaning is conveyed through different language forms and features ■ Uses language appropriate to audience, purpose and context in a competent way. 	C: 9 8 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Composes a coherent and somewhat effective text ■ Demonstrates limited understanding of how the ideas, cultural understandings and discourses of a text may be reshaped for a different context ■ Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of how meaning is conveyed through different language forms and features ■ Uses language that is generally appropriate to audience, purpose and context. 	D: 6 5 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Composes a rudimentary text ■ Demonstrates little or no understanding of how the ideas, cultural understandings and discourses of a text may be reshaped for a different context ■ Demonstrates little or no knowledge and understanding of how meaning is conveyed through different language forms and features ■ Uses language that may not be appropriate to audience, purpose and context. 	E: 3 2 1